The Worst Boy

By Edward S. Ellis

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"I'LL SEND YOU TO THE HOSPITAL." PAGE 227.

THE WORST BOY

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS

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THE WORST BOY

CHAPTER I

DICK CHANDLER

IF there was a single verdict upon which the men, women, and children of Berwyn Township were unanimously agreed, it was that Dick Chandler was the worst boy that ever lived. Squire Gilkeson declared:

"He's ahead of any one in state's prison; I'd say he was going straight for that place if it warn't for one thing."

"What's that?" asked Billy Warner, the shoemaker, with whom the squire was holding converse.

"He'll be hung afore he can reach it! If the gallers don't git him purty soon we may as well abolish the institootion. I s'pose the good Lord allows sich scand'lous young villains to flourish for a time to sarve as a warning and to keep Satan from going out of bus'ness."

And the wrathful squire passed down the road at a pace that helped to relieve his roiled feelings.

It was about the same hour on that sultry summer afternoon that Mrs. Liggett pulled her boy Tommy through the kitchen-door, laid him across her knee, and applied her slipper with unusual vigor.

"There!" she exclaimed when she released the whimpering youngster; "I guess you'll remember after this not to play with that Chandler boy again!"

"I can't help it, mamma," sniffed the urchin.

"Can't help it! What do you mean by saying that?"

"You lick me for playing with him, and he licks me if I don't play with him; so what's a feller to do?"

"He does, eh? I'll go and see his mother right off!"

And the indignant parent snatched her bonnet from where it hung on a nail behind the door, and started hurriedly on her errand.

On the evening of the same day Orson Parsons, reaching his home from the city, called his son Arthur, a lad of ten years, to render

his report on an important matter. The father, at a loss as to the best way to abate Dick Chandler's tyrannies, had discussed the problem in the train with two other commuters whose young sons suffered from the same persecution. By-and-by the parents agreed upon a scheme which, so far as their boys were concerned, promised to be effective. This was for the three youngsters to combine and form what Mr. Parsons facetiously called a "trust." In other words, they were to unite in an attack upon the bully—not all together, but in succession.

The plan seemed a good one.

"Of course," explained Parsons, "whichever of our boys opens the campaign will get the worst of it, for young Chandler is a terror; but he will be somewhat spent, and before he has a chance to gain his second wind he will be facing a fresh foe, who will keep him busy and ought to tire him out. The task of the third will be easy. Then the three can unite in a general assault and make their conquest complete."

One of the neighbors was thoughtful.

"Suppose the Chandler youth defeats all three?"

"It is incredible, but, if he does, the others

will deserve all they get; my boy won't receive any sympathy from me."

The others expressed similar sentiments, but none was wholly free from a misgiving that the plan might not work as well as they hoped. Mr. Parsons, therefore, did not wait until the evening meal was over before calling his boy before him.

The appearance of Arthur was not reassuring. One eye was puffed, his nose was larger than usual, and more than one vivid scratch showed upon his chubby countenance.

"I made him change his clothes as soon as he got home," explained his mother, "for he was a sight."

"Tell me about it, my son," said the father, encouragingly; "I hope you three gave that Chandler boy a lesson he won't soon forget."

Arthur hung his head as if he had no liking for the subject, but his parent persisted and at last the truth came out.

"When I spoke to Sam and Jim they said their fathers had told 'em the same as you told me, and they were awfully tickled. We agreed to pick a quarrel with Dick on the way home from school. You know that's easy, 'cause he loves to quarrel with any one that'll give him a chance. I was to pitch into

him first and fight as long as I could. Then I was to holler for Jim, and he promised to take my place and do the same as I'd done, and Sam was to finish Dick, if Jim hadn't done it. Then if Dick didn't holler ''Nough!' we'd all hammer him together."

"A capital plan!" exclaimed Mr. Parsons. "It was sure to succeed; but go on with your story."

"Well," said Arthur with a sigh, "I didn't have any trouble in starting a quarrel, and we went at it as hard as we could. You know, father, I'm not any match for Dick. He's much bigger and stronger."

"Of course not, but I am sure you gave a good account of yourself."

"I did the best I could, and when I couldn't fight any more I yelled for Jim to take his turn, but he didn't come, and I hollered for Sam, but he didn't come either; and when I got a chance to look down the road, I saw them both running for home as hard as they could."

"The cowards! It was shameful to desert you in that fashion. Have you seen either of them since?"

"Yes; after Dick tired himself out on me I started for home 'cross lots. I met Sam

and Jim on the edge of Miller's woods, where they were waiting for me."

"What did they say for themselves?"

"They said they meant to do as they agreed, but all at once both remembered that they had promised their mothers to hurry home after school and so they started. They said, too, that after watching me and Dick for a while they knew there wasn't any use for them to help, for Dick could lick all three of us and not half try."

"Well," remarked the disgusted father, "if all you boys have no more spirit than to submit to one bully, I hope he will make every day of your lives miserable. Not one of you is entitled to any sympathy."

"I think, papa, you forgot something."

"What's that?"

"S'pose we three had licked Dick Chandler. We don't live anywhere near each other and can't always be together, and he'd be sure to catch us alone."

"I hope he will do so often; no matter how often he trounces you, you needn't come to me with your complaints, and I'm sure it will be the same with Sam and Jim."

It was only three days after this incident that Squire Gilkeson harnessed his mare to

his light-running wagon and drove to the little country town of Readville to make some purchases for his family. The anniversary of American independence was so near that he invested a part of his funds in two packs of Chinese crackers for the pleasure of his twin boys.

"It's a waste of money to spend twelve cents that'll soon be burned up, and like as not make 'em lose their eyes, but I'll look out for that," he added, with a flirt of his head and a jerk of the reins. "I'll hand the things out to 'em one at a time, and sit on the piazza and watch 'em shoot 'em off."

The squire was alone in his vehicle well to the front and held the reins in one hand, frequently jerking them and chirruping to the mare, who paid no heed, but jogged forward with the unvarying gait that was no faster than a moderate walk. Although the old gentleman wore horn spectacles he could not see objects clearly unless they were close to him. He was also somewhat hard of hearing.

Because of his impaired vision, he did not observe a boy walking toward him in the middle of the road and kicking up considerable dust. The lad, however, recognized

him and dodged behind a large willow at the side of the highway, where, because of its size and beauty, it had been allowed to stand.

The youngster kept out of sight, peeping slyly round the trunk until the squire had passed. Then he slipped out, ran to the rear of the vehicle, and crawled in. The deafness of the old gentleman prevented his hearing the slight noise, and he did not notice the small additional weight.

Having entered the wagon without detection, Dick Chandler looked around to see what mischief he could do. The squire had made a number of purchases in town and they lay in the straw behind him in the bottom of the vehicle. One package in coarse paper contained two pounds of soggy, brown sugar, which at that time was its cheapest form. Dick pushed his forefinger through the yielding paper and feasted until tired. Then a smaller package caught his eye. He uncoiled the twist of paper, and his eyes sparkled. There were six sticks of candy wound about with ascending red stripes, like so many tiny barber's poles.

Dick squeezed these into his pocket to dispose of at his leisure, for just then he was

surfeited with the sweets. He was about to explore further, when an unexpected sight almost made him shout with joy. The fire-crackers—one pack for each of the twins—nestled in the side pockets of the squire's alpaca coat. Being of a frugal mind, he made sure that he got his money's worth. He had torn open the end of the respective packs, until he could see the clusters of little red cylinders, and had then shoved them back in place, with the main fuse, into which all the others were interwoven, dangling outside.

Could there be a more resistless temptation to a bad boy? He thrust a hand into one of his trousers pockets and drew out several soiled matches, which were not of the safety variety. One of these was whisked along the sole of Dick's shoe. Shading the tiny twist of flame until it was well going, he crept softly forward and touched the wee bit of blaze to the fuse oscillating from the end of each pack. He paused long enough to be certain that the sputtering fire would do its work and then dropped out of the rear of the wagon.

Squire Gilkeson had been absorbed for a half-hour in trying to solve the most difficult problem that had ever been laid before him.

As he turned it over in his mind, he followed his habit of communing with himself:

"It looks to me as if Cale Perkins is in a tight place, though he may squeeze out, for he's a mighty slippery feller. He says he found 'Lige Thompson's bay mare in the public highway, she having jumped over the bars which somebody had let down. She was a mile from home when Cale met her and placed himself astride her back, the same being his intention to ride her home. That would sound reasonable if Cale hadn't rode exactly t'other way from 'Lige's house. Cale hasn't made it clear how this happened, but some of his stories are ingen'ous.

"Cale had the mare on a gallop, heading straight as aforesaid, when who should he meet but 'Lige Thompson himself, who invited him to stop and explain things. Instead of doing so, Cale put the mare to her best paces, and it was the easiest thing in the world for her to draw 'way from the old roan that 'Lige was riding, but he was that mad that he kept up the chase for more than a mile, when he come upon the mare cropping grass at the roadside, while Cale laid on t'other side, with his leg broke. The mare had throwed him, and Cale was in a bad fix.

"On account of his leg, 'Lige couldn't chastise Cale as he would have done otherwise, but 'Lige was mad clean through, and before Cale's leg was fairly well he sued him for horse-stealing. When they 'peared afore me the case looked dead ag'in Cale, and I made up my mind to hold him. 'Lige had seen him with his own eyes riding away from his farm on the back of the mare. He made affidavit that Cale was running off with his property.

"And now Cale swears the mare run away with him, and he sues 'Lige for damages on account of his broken leg, that he got because of his trying to do a neighborly act by picking up an astray horse to take home to the owner——"

With an exclamation of surprise, the squire leaped from his seat under the impression that he had been struck by a bolt from the blue. Both sides of his alpaca coat were wrapped in smoke and flame, and the volleying explosions followed so fast that they blended with one another. The startled mare broke into a gallop, but he gave no attention to her. In the midst of his flurry he caught sight of Dick Chandler running down the road, so near that he was still in the old man's

field of vision. With one bound the squire leaped out of the wagon, which went bumping homeward behind the frightened mare, and dashed for the fugitive, who broke into terrified flight.

No boy could surpass Dick in running, but he quickly made the alarming discovery that he was overmatched, and was losing ground rapidly, before the long, slim legs of his indignant pursuer. In a panic he darted to one side of the road and whisked over the fence, but within the following three minutes the squire gripped him by the collar and swung his whip aloft.

"I'll teach you how to set fire to a man!"

The lash whizzed through the air and stung the legs of the boy as if it were red-hot wire. He protested:

"Oh, Mr. Gilkeson! What are you whipping me for?"

The astounding impudence of the question stayed the upraised arm for the moment.

"What am I whipping you for? 'Cause you're the worst boy ever born; everybody that meets you oughter whip you within an inch of your life."

As the lash circled overhead again, the writhing victim wailed:

"I didn't do anything, Mr. Gilkeson; I seen your coat afire and yelled to you. Didn't you hear me?"

Again the upraised hand was checked. Was it possible the boy was speaking the truth? Dick was quick to see and seize his advantage.

"I was so worried about you that I hollered, and seeing you didn't hear me, 'cause you're a little deaf, I started to jump into the wagon to help you, when you blew up."

"What made you run away from me? Tell me that."

"I was afraid some of the pieces might hit me. I'm awful sorry, Mr. Gilkeson, for you're the nicest man that ever was."

The squire was puzzled. Perhaps the case of Perkins *versus* Thompson had befogged his brain.

"I don't know whether to believe you or not," he declared; "I'll think it over, and if I make up my mind I was mistaken, I'll finish this licking. Off with you!"

Dick lost no time in vanishing from the spot, for he was in mortal fear that the old gentleman might change his mind before he could get beyond his reach. But the squire, his tattered garments still smoking, so that he

had to pinch them in several places, strode homeward, where he found a mare, a scorched wagon, and an anxious family awaiting him. A consultation with his wife removed all doubt as to Dick's guilt, but the opportunity to repair this error of judgment was deferred, and finally the whole matter passed from the squire's mind, crowded out perhaps by other happenings that were of greater moment.

CHAPTER II

A COLLEGE ESCAPADE

IN recalling the tempestuous boyhood of Dick Chandler there is only one incident that reflects credit upon him, and an analysis of that throws doubt upon its real merit. At the age of six years he began attending the country district school. Several truths speedily appeared. He was the most mentally gifted of all the pupils. He seemed to study little, but his progress was astonishing. At the same time he was undeniably the worst boy in the class. His quickness in learning gave him more leisure for vicious mischief, and he improved, or rather abused, the opportunity to the utmost.

As a fighter he quickly forged to the front. He would attack a larger and older lad, and though he was defeated several times at the beginning of his pugilistic career, it did not check his aggressiveness. More than one boy who was powerful enough to vanquish him, preferred to keep out of his path or quietly to

submit to his tyranny rather than go through the experience of a bout with him. He was in reality the bane of the school and the pest of the neighborhood. When a farmer discovered that his choicest fruit had been stolen or destroyed in pure wantonness, he was likely to find that all clues to the identity of the criminal had been hidden, but he had never a doubt in his mind as to the offender.

Mr. Garland was a miserly, crusty old farmer, disliked by his neighbors because of his repellent ways. He lived with his two spinster sisters, who were as unsociable as he. He was the owner of a bulldog which, by many persons, was accepted as a fair type of Dick Chandler, for he was always combative and ferocious. His face was as ugly as could be, and his under-jaw projected to such an extent that Billy Warner insisted that he could hang his hat on it. All the same he was too prudent ever to make the attempt.

The owner gave out that he had bought the brute as a protection against tramps. Before many days had passed, and several of those vagrants had come flying through the gate with the dog nipping at their heels, certain mystical marks appeared on the fence-

posts. Touseled wanderers, when about to open the gate, caught sight of the hieroglyphics and hastily turned away and passed on. The dog became so dangerous that his owner was compelled to keep him chained during the daytime, though he was always unloosed after dark. Once or twice he broke his fastening and caused as much alarm in the neighborhood as if he were a lion escaped from a menagerie. He was fired at and hit by several stray shots, but they did not seem to harm him.

One summer afternoon, ten or twelve boys were swimming in the pool at the foot of the meadow on Garland's farm, when cries of fright were heard. Quite likely the dog's owner had set him free, pretending that he had broken his chain. Be that as it may, the first thing the lads saw was the brindled animal, as it leaped from the bank into the water and made for them.

The boys, in their panic, would have scrambled to land and run for their lives, offering their foe his best chance; but Dick shouted to them to stay in the water, and to dive when the dog came too near.

"He don't amount to anything in here; we can soon tire him out."

Just then Dick saw that the brute was swimming straight for him. Probably it had been attracted by his voice. Dick followed his own advice. Watching the black muzzle until the jaws were ready to shoot forward and bury the fangs in his shoulder, he dropped below the surface, swam under the body, and silently came up behind the creature.

The bulldog is not the most intelligent of his species, and this one must have expected his prey to rise in front where he could easily seize him. The first notice of his mistake was when Dick grasped his knobby collar at the back and snapped his head under water. Such creatures are essentially land-animals and are at a disadvantage when out of their element. The dog struggled furiously, but the boy had little difficulty in holding him under until the creature was exhausted. He then flung him on the bank, a conquered animal.

The maddest man within ten miles round was old Mr. Garland, who threatened to sue Dick's father for the injury done by his son to his blooded dog.

The boy at that time was fourteen years old. In the following autumn, having long

passed beyond the control of his parents, he was sent to a military academy famous for its rigid discipline. Six weeks later he was back home, having been expelled as incorrigible. The district shuddered when it learned the fact of his return, and wondered what was coming next.

Dick was an only child, and his mother was deeply religious. She had prayed over him from the day of his birth. Dick had some affection for his patient mother, whose tears often caused him real pain; but instead of turning that grief to joy by doing as she wished, he preferred simply to hide so far as he could his evil deeds from her. This was his way of making her comfortable.

"So long as she doesn't know anything about the fun I'm having, and thinks I'm the goodest goody-goody in Sunday school, she's happy, and so am I."

This was the principle that guided him as concerned the only parent for whom he cared. His father was stern and punished his son with severity, and was often impatient with his wife because of her tenderness toward him. When the boy came home in disgrace from the military academy his father determined, as a last resort, to send him to sea,

hoping thereby to put him beyond his sight and knowledge for two or three years.

Before this step, with its doubtful results, could be taken, Mr. Chandler succumbed to a grievous affliction. He had shown for some time a growing eccentricity of conduct, which rapidly developed into delusions that caused his removal to an asylum, where he died a few months later, his mind so blank that he was unable to recognize his wife or son.

When the estate was settled it was found that a moderate competence remained. Obeying his mother's urgings, or rather a curious inclination on his own part, Dick matriculated at one of the leading colleges. He passed an excellent entrance examination and took rank as one of the brightest students in his class.

Grief, no matter how profound, rarely causes permanent reformation, and Dick remained the same reckless, daring, conscienceless youth that he had always been. Several causes made him popular among the students. In addition to his brilliant intellect he was equally successful in athletics. While a sophomore he was given a place on the college nine, and in the final game for the cham-

pionship he made the play that brought victory to his side. He was no less skilful on the football team, and, being already acknowledged the champion boxer, his associates felt real pride in him.

It was at the opening of Dick's senior year that a shameful outrage occurred in college. Three seniors who had drunk enough intoxicants to make them reckless became involved in an affray with several citizens, in which two of the latter were so badly injured that for a time their lives were in danger. The indignant faculty lost no time in setting an investigation on foot. Two of the offenders were identified and expelled, but they slipped out of town before the officers of the law could arrest them.

During the trial, as it may be called, the two gave the college faculty the impression that their companion was a professional pugilist, with whom they started out for a good time, and who fled across country on the night of the terrific fight. He was described as a powerful savage, with a full dark beard, known in the sporting world as Black Mike. Since he appeared to have no connection with the college, no further attention was paid to him.

Had the faculty probed further, or had either of the two who were punished chosen to betray their comrade, they would have given his name as Dick Chandler.

And then the miracle happened!

CHAPTER III

A CHANGED OUTLOOK

DWIGHT L. MOODY, the inspired evangelist, had been conducting a religious revival in the college town for a fortnight, with the result of a spiritual awakening that shook the venerable institution from center to circumference. At the height of the services he gave a private interview one evening to a student who had sent him a written request for the favor.

When the caller presented himself the preacher was impressed by his appearance. He was tall, athletic, and handsome, and his face showed unusual intelligence. The evangelist saw that he was laboring under tense excitement, though he held himself well in hand.

"Mr. Moody," said he, "my name, as my note informed you, is Richard Chandler, and I'm the worst young man in college—the worst in the state—there isn't a viler wretch unhanged."

Moody sprang to his feet and caught his hand.

"It is just such fellows as you that the Lord is looking for."

"If you had said the Devil, I should have told you that he found me long ago," replied Dick, a little startled by the characteristic reception.

"Many of us can say the same thing, Richard; it is the best frame of mind that a penitent can have."

Dick sat down, shivering with emotion.

"I don't think the Lord ought to pardon me: I don't deserve it."

"Who of us deserves it? But there is no limit to the love of the Saviour. Was not Saul of Tarsus converted while journeying toward Damascus to persecute the Christians?"

"He never was one-tenth as wicked as I; he did what he believed was right, while I have been doing wrong all my life, knowing it was wrong. I feel as if the best thing I can do is to blow out these worthless brains and rid the world of an unmitigated pest. It would be better without me."

"Oh, my dear lad, no good can possibly be accomplished by such an act. You are a

young man and ought to have many years of usefulness before you. How much better to devote those years to undoing your evil past! That's what the Lord would like you to do. He is waiting for you to consent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'"

With infinite tact, wise encouragement, gentle argument, and never-failing resource, that wonderful leader helped to guide the inquirer out of the valley of despair into the realm of hope and blessed assurance. Dick Chandler passed through the new birth, and if ever a man was soundly converted, it was he.

Without consulting with any one, Dick went to the president of the college and confessed his shameful part in the affray with the citizens months before. He insisted that he should be expelled, and was prepared to accept the penalty. The venerable man was startled and replied that he would consult Mr. Moody and think it over. On the advice of the evangelist the two students were allowed to return, upon their pledge of honor to reform their conduct.

One of Dick's first acts was to write to his mother and tell her of his conversion and his resolution to study for the ministry.

Some months later, as he leaned over her dying bed and tenderly kissed the pale lips, she murmured with radiant face:

"I knew my prayers would be answered. I die happy; God be praised!" And so she passed away.

Some time later, on a crisp night in October, Dick Chandler descended from the rickety railway train at Riggsville and asked of the agent the way to the home of Squire Redwood.

The man, who was writing with his stub pencil in his flabby memorandum book, looked up.

"Do you mean Squire Silas Redwood?"

"The same."

"That's the road—straight ahead; don't turn to the right or left. But do you know how far it is to his house?"

"I judge not many miles from what he wrote me."

"It's four of them!" announced the agent, as if the distance were ten times as great.

Dick laughed.

"You don't call that far; it will give me a chance to stretch my legs. I shouldn't ride if a carriage were waiting me."

By the light of the lantern overhead the

agent inspected the other from head to foot. He did not hide his admiration.

"Well, I can see the tramp won't hurt you. Wouldn't I give a good deal for your build! Will you know the squire's home when you reach it?"

"He told me it is an old brick building, standing among a group of trees on the left, and approached through a short lane, lined on each side with poplars."

"Couldn't describe it better myself; you can't miss it; there's no house like it within miles. The squire owns fine horses and, if he knowed you was coming, would have met you here."

"That's why I didn't tell him when I should reach Riggsville; I sent my trunk yesterday."

"It arrived last night, and the squire took it away this morning."

"Good-night, my friend."

Dick made a half-military salute as he wheeled, walked briskly to the other end of the shaky platform and sprang lightly to the ground, heedless of the two steps placed there for the convenience of those who used the cars. Entering the main highway, he swung off with the pace he showed when

touring through the White Mountains, or, during his college days, indulging in a twenty-mile tramp.

The clear sky was studded with myriads of stars. His short "sack" coat was buttoned up the front, his hands were thrust partly into the pockets at his hips, and he drew in the ozone, and enjoyed to the full the thrill of living. Riggsville was only a hamlet, and he quickly left the straggling houses behind.

Chandler had finished his course at the theological seminary, his determination to enter the ministry being as unswerving as when he formed it after his never-to-be-forgotten interview with Moody. Like a sensible young man he retained his love for athletics, and, so long as he was at liberty to play on the baseball and football teams, held his supremacy over all others. His influence was for the best, for he was consistent in his life and never did a thing or said a word unworthy of his profession.

Dick's enjoyment of his triumphs in athletics was keen. He was human, and his blood tingled after he had made some desperate attempt and succeeded. Time and again he was assured of the glory and profit

that beckoned on the ball field, and but for his conversion, more than likely he would have yielded to the temptation that has won over many a college youth. But he smiled and shook his head, when each of the leading baseball clubs offered him a contract, covering three years, at a salary for the season double that he could ever hope to earn in the pulpit.

"I thank you," he said, "but I can't think of it. Five or ten years from now I should be a 'has been' of no use to myself or any one else."

"You could live on the fortune you would make," suggested the manager of the champion nine; "many men who were never as good players as you are wealthy now. You could open a saloon and your fame as a ball-player would bring you no end of custom."

Dick's clear laugh rang out.

"I am studying for the ministry."

"What of that?" asked the persistent manager. "Nothing will help a sky-pilot more than to know how to line 'em out and scoop 'em in; I'll add a thousand to my offer and make the contract for five years. Come now."

"Rather I should go now," replied Dick, who genially bade the magnate good-day.

Chandler received several calls before he was licensed to preach. One was due to the admiration of a rich classmate, who, though not a professor of religion himself, insisted that any chap who knew the ball like Dick Chandler, would know how to preach. So this young man wrote to his father, who was president of the board of trustees of a fashionable church, and urged him to make a bid for the prize before some other church secured him. A call promptly followed, but Dick declined it, as he did all the others.

Truth to tell, the young clergyman held some peculiar ideas regarding the ministry. He refused to appear before any congregation as a candidate, particularly when several others did so. He was undecided where he ought to go, and with childlike faith relied upon God to direct him. He never doubted that He would do so, and he simply waited for the divine guidance.

Once or twice he thought of entering the foreign mission field, but the call was never distinct enough to send him thither. When his friends reproved him for turning away

from the tempting invitations, he replied that he was waiting for his Father to tell him which one to choose. Like Samuel of old, he would obey in the same hour that he heard the voice. Finally he made his decision.

"I shall teach a country school for a time; the contact with children, and with the men who make their living from the soil, will be the best of discipline for me; I cannot fail to learn much that I need to know, and must become the better prepared for my life-work."

This is the way it came about that Dick was striding over the country road leading from Riggsville station to the home of Squire Redwood, the most prominent trustee of the Ampere school.

As he had said to the agent, the walk was more pleasant than riding. He had declined the squire's offer to meet him, for, after the long, dusty hours in the train, he yearned for bodily exercise. There could be no mistaking the spacious, comfortable house when he came opposite the lane whose gate stood invitingly open. Through the cool shadows cast by the double line of poplars Dick walked observingly, eyes and ears alert. He

caught the welcoming twinkle of light among the trees, and was drawing near it, when he was startled by the cavernous bark of a dog, which came tumbling over the palings and heading for him.

The young man stopped, uncertain what he ought to do.

"I've heard that barking dogs don't bite, but there are exceptions to the rule; I can't say I admire the voice of that canine."

In the star-gleam he dimly saw the huge creature coming threateningly forward. He spoke soothingly, but the animal gave no heed. The situation was unpleasant, and was fast growing more so. Suddenly the door of the sitting-room was drawn inward, and the form of a man stood out in relief against the yellow light behind him.

"Shut up, Tige!" he called to the dog, who instantly stopped barking, but moved forward, wagging his tail so energetically that his haunches oscillated in response to the motor.

Dick had never met Squire Redwood, but he knew that the gaunt, stooping figure, with the bushy hair and grizzly whiskers under his jaws, as they were brought out by the lamp-light, was he. The old man bent still

farther, and shading his eyes with his horizontal palm, peered into the darkness.

"Who are you?" he called in a thin voice.

"Your new teacher, Mr. Chandler," was the cheery reply.

"You don't say! I'm right down glad to see you, though I don't see you very well; can you find your way through the gate?"

"Yes, if Tige doesn't object."

"Bless your heart, he won't hurt you; wait till I fetch the lamp."

"Never mind; there's no need of it." While the squire was in the act of turning round, Dick, hat in hand, came through the door, glowing with health and high spirits.

"Good-evening, my friends," he saluted, grasping the horny palm of the man, and then turning to his wife, who was knitting in front of the apple-wood fire which crackled on the hearth.

"Don't rise," he protested, as she caught hold of the ball of yarn in her lap and made the preliminary movement of coming to her feet. She obeyed, looking up with pleased admiration at the stalwart youth.

In answer to their questions he said that his evening meal was over, and he couldn't

think of eating until the morrow, when he promised to astonish them by his appetite. As he learned afterwards, the couple with whom he was to make his home were in good circumstances, and had a son and daughter, both of whom were married and lived in another neighborhood. The squire was not only chairman of the school trustees, but of the trustees of the Ampere church, and none in the community was held in higher regard than he.

It was on a Tuesday evening that Dick Chandler came to the home of Squire Redwood. The Ampere public school had been opened as usual on the first Monday in September, but a few weeks later the teacher fell ill, and was forced to go home, and Dick was secured to take his place. Having agreed to preach for a distant congregation on Sunday, and being opposed to traveling on that day, he could not reach his new field until Tuesday; but notice of the reopening of the school had been given at church, and the pupils were sure to be on hand on Wednesday morning.

Dick greatly liked the squire and his wife. They were plain folks, but of more than ordinary intelligence. From them he

learned much of Ampere and its people. One remark, made by the squire, just before family prayer, was remembered by the instructor:

"You're going to have trouble with that school, Mr. Chandler, as sure as you live."

"Why do you think so?"

"I don't believe there's a worse one in the state; time and again the teacher has been compelled to give up and leave. It isn't so bad in summer, spring, and fall, but a parcel of scamps come in the winter, with no other purpose than to make the teacher's life miserable. Howsomever," added the old man, glancing at the magnificent form before him, "you look as if you could take care of yourself."

"I hope so," modestly replied Dick.

CHAPTER IV

THE YOUNG SCHOOLMASTER

THE Ampere school district was several miles in area. It was made up mostly of farms, many of the dwellings being widely separated. Its only semblance of a settlement was the hamlet called "The Corners," where two highways crossed at right angles. All told, the clustering houses numbered barely a dozen. They included three shops, owned respectively by a blacksmith, a shoemaker, and a wheelwright. There was also a grocery store, and, more imposing than all, an old-fashioned tavern, upon whose creaking sign could be traced in faded gilt the words, "Traveler's Rest." On the farther edge of the extensive district was the historic Ampere church. Between the large upper front windows of the brick structure, the figures "1795" told when it was reared upon the site where two smaller and more ancient buildings had stood in turn.

As one passed in front of "Traveler's

Rest," and walked a fourth of a mile, he came to a skeleton wooden bridge. A few rods beyond this was a small structure of stone, with a single broad front door and two windows upon each of three sides, the exception being the end next to the road. Here, just below where the stone chimney rose a foot above the roof, the figures "1823" were cut, by which token all who cared to know learned the year in which the Ampere public school building was erected.

On a certain bright morning in October, nearly twoscore boys and girls were tagging one another, shouting, laughing, and frolicking around the schoolhouse, with the abandonment natural to healthy youngsters who know that their hour of enjoyment is fast nearing an end. They ranged from six to fifteen years of age. The biggest was a negro lad, Pete Featherston, the bound boy of a neighboring farmer. Pete attended school most of the year excepting in midsummer, and thus far had succeeded in mastering the alphabet, though generally he had to learn it all over again when he came back after his brief absence from instruction.

A sudden hush fell upon the group. Some one had excitedly shouted:

"Here he comes! Here he comes!"

Boys and girls became mute and motionless and stared across the bridge to the top of the slope beyond. They saw a tall, muscular young man coming toward them with a long, swift stride. As he stepped upon the bridge the warped planks rattled under his tread. By this time the youngsters noted that he wore gray, well-fitting clothes, and a derby hat, that he was good-looking, and his face was smooth excepting for a dark mustache. As he drew nearer he cheerily greeted them:

"Good-morning! I am glad to see you."

Nearly every girl hung her head, with a forefinger thrust in the corner of her mouth. Most of the boys silently grinned, and Pete Featherston scrambled behind the schoolhouse, and with a chuckle peeped around the corner. Not one of the pupils returned the salutation of the teacher, but he was not offended, for he understood it all.

Inserting the key given him by Squire Redwood, Dick pushed open the door and stepped within. A glance showed him a rusty "tin plate" stove in the middle of the

room, whose capacity enabled it to consume wood a yard long and to carry most of the heat through the long stretch of pipe to the chimney, where it was wasted in the outer air.

Surrounding the stove were four low benches, an opening at one corner permitting access to the stove. On these benches the classes generally sat when reciting, or if the school was crowded, they were used by the smaller boys and girls. Around the other sides of the room, with the exception of the door and where the wood was piled, was a row of desks and benches facing the wall. The teacher's broad, flat desk had the wood-pile behind, and the door when fully open just cleared it. The instructor's chair had a back, but one of the arms was missing.

With the smaller key that had also been given him by Squire Redwood, he unlocked the desk. Within was a rusty hand bell, a ruler, an ink bottle, a few pens, a holder, and a roll book, wherein his predecessor had written in a neat hand the names of the pupils, with a record of their daily attendance.

Dick placed all these on top of his desk, and, glancing at his watch, saw that it lacked

a few minutes of nine. Recalling the advice of a famous educator, he next did a trifling, but wise thing. He went to the door and asked several of the larger boys to bring in a few sticks of wood, since the interior, after he had raised the windows, was too chilly for comfort. It is a principle of human nature that the one who does another a favor feels better disposed toward him than before. It was no slight task for the boys to split and break up the kindling, for there was little choice, so far as sharpness was concerned, between the back and front of the ax. The laughing lads, however, toiled cheerfully and brought in more than enough fuel to last during the day.

A little while after, the teacher asked Pete Featherston to give notice that school was about to open. The delighted Pete snatched up the bell in such haste that he stumbled in, dashing through the door, striking his head against the jamb. He was not hurt, however, and posting himself on the big stone that served as a step, he swung the instrument to and fro until every one of his playmates had passed by and entered the building.

The children straggled in with no regard

to order and shuffled one another in their strife for seats. Dick waited until all sat expectantly facing him. Then he gently tapped his desk with his ruler, and was silent until quiet reigned. He spoke for a few minutes, telling them he had come to be their teacher; that he was pleased with their looks, and was sure they would get on well together. He meant to do his best to instruct them, and knew they all wished to gain an education. He was too tactful to talk long, but he laid down a few rules, which he expected them to obey, gently warning them that he would accept nothing less than obedience.

Having said enough, he asked them to join him in repeating the Lord's Prayer. The proposal was novel and brought smiles to a number of faces, but on the whole they did well. Taking his seat, he next proceeded to call the names written in the roll-book. As a boy or girl answered, "Present," he glanced keenly at the child, so as to impress himself with his or her face. He was pleased to find that, of the fifty names, forty-two responded. Just as he had finished, a chubby youngster with a blue-covered book under his arm stepped quickly through the

door, snatched off his straw hat, and grinning widely, hurried to a seat.

"What is your name, please?" asked the teacher.

"Billy Brown," was the prompt response.

"I am glad to see you, Billy, but don't forget that school opens at nine o'clock in the morning and at two in the afternoon. Try to be in your seat when the roll is called."

"Yes, sir," was the respectful reply, with another grin that bisected the freckled face.

And now the serious business opened. Most of the forenoon was employed in examining children and learning their attainments in their studies. No systematic grading was possible, as in these modern days, for beginning with Pete Featherston the colored youth, and his dubious knowledge of the alphabet, he found two boys and three girls who were so well advanced in arithmetic, grammar, and history that they were enrolled as the A class. When school dismissed for the noon recess the preliminaries were ended and real work was under way.

One of Dick Chandler's traits was his sense of the humorous. He loved the overflowing spirits as they appeared on the playground, and thought none the less of a lad

who showed a mischievous disposition in school; but he knew how necessary it was that such ebullitions should be held in check and the truth impressed upon the pupils that there is a time for work as well as for play. Moreover, he knew that the best method ever devised for holding a child out of mischief is to keep him busy. Again, when a set of pupils become languid from study there is nothing so refreshing as a laugh. Two or three times, Dick used some novel exercise, such as seeing who could add up a column of figures first, while he briskly called them off and they hurriedly wrote them on their slates. When interest in this exercise began to lag, he told a funny incident that delighted all, after which they turned to their studies with new zest.

Dick was quick to note the personality of each boy and girl. Billy Brown was a natural clown. During the afternoon, when the hum of study filled the air, the teacher glanced down the room and saw Billy press a forefinger under each eye, with his little fingers in the corners of his mouth. Then he drew down on the former and pulled the smaller fingers apart, with the result that his face assumed a frightful appearance,

suggesting the masks with which children sometimes attempt to frighten one another.

This display was for the benefit of Milly Sands, a mild, gentle girl, who was sitting near the stove and happened to look across at the youth. She was so indignant that she flirted her head, frowned, and centered her attention on her book.

"Billy," called the teacher, "I wouldn't do that, for your face is homely enough as it is."

There was a general titter, and the culprit blushed and tried to look innocent as he bent over his speller.

Harry Taggart, a slim, pale youth, was the athlete of the school. He had often said to his playmates that he meant to become a "circus actor," and nature seemed to have intended him for that calling. Looking out of the window at recess, Dick saw him turning cartwheels, standing on his head and walking on his hands, with his feet pointed toward the sky. When he taunted another boy into a chase, his own skill in dodging always saved him from capture. He could climb, run, and jump amazingly. Furthermore, he was the brightest member of the A class. Dick could not help liking him

from the first. When Billy Brown softly reached around the back of the boy next to him, and groped for a single hair on Harry's neck, the other detected him, grasped his finger as quick as a flash, bit it, and never looked off his book. Billy snatched his hand away, shook it, frowned, and suppressed the "Ouch!" that rose to his lips. The teacher had witnessed the whole thing, but said nothing. He passed his hand across his mouth and wiped off the smile he could not wholly repress.

"That will do; none of that," he said warningly, a few minutes later, when Billy held a bit of twisted paper beside his head and aimed it at the nose of quiet, studious Warren Curtis. It was remarkable how instantly Billy turned the action into a harmless scratching of his ear and seemed to be wholly absorbed in his lesson!

Less individuality appeared among the girls. Milly Sands, Lizzie Donnell, and Hilda Douglas were the three girls who had been listed in the A class. In going to and returning from school they generally walked side-by-side, with their arms around one another's waists. Until the teacher mildly objected, they sat thus most of the

time while at their studies. Over their spelling lesson, interlocked in this fashion, they swayed to and fro in rhythmical unison, while their lips went through all sorts of contortions, as they conned the words.

Pete Featherston was always happy. His size and strength kept off everything like imposition, while nothing seemed to ruffle his good nature. After poring a long time over his primer he proudly announced to his instructor that he knew every letter excepting *b, d,* and *q,* and a few others of "no account." The trouble with the letters named was that he couldn't make sure which way their "bulge" turned.

"De man dat inwented 'em," declared Pete, "oughter made 'em all *o's* or *x's* or *g's;* den I'd know 'em de minute I laid eyes on 'em."

Under the teacher's patient guidance, the dusky student finally mastered the problem, and before spring came could spell words of two and even three letters, and was the proudest youth in Ampere district.

As a rule, a crisis in the conduct of a country school comes within a week after it is opened by a new instructor. Some of the boys can be reached through their sense of

honor, their love of study, or their pride in earning marks of merit, but there are always a few who are flint against such appeals. When the discipline of the school was threatened, Dick called the switch into use, and quickly quenched the mutinous spirit. He made himself the master in fact as well as in name. While administering the punishment, he said:

"I won't say that it hurts me more than you, for it doesn't hurt me a bit; you deserve what you are getting, and your crying won't help you. Obey the rules which you know, and you will not suffer; disobey them, and you'll receive more like this."

The culprits gouged their eyes, sniffed, and decided that the wisest thing for them to do was to obey. They forgot themselves now and then, but the smarting reminder soon wrought its perfect work.

"Every boy and girl has an immortal soul," mused Dick, as he thoughtfully walked homeward. "In a certain sense they are in my hands, and I must give an account of how I meet the duty placed upon me."

CHAPTER V

AMPERE FOLKS

ONE truth was borne in upon Dick Chandler; the teaching of the Ampere public school never could form more than a part of his work. He might persuade the boys and girls to be honest, truthful, studious, and obedient; he might be the means of leading the more intelligent to become Christians, but that was only a portion of his duty. It was his to look upon the whole field as his mission, and to do his utmost, with the help of heaven, to improve the spiritual condition of the people.

The young man was fortunate in being allowed to make his home with Squire Redwood and his wife. Though the old farmer was uneducated, he was bright, observing, charitable, and carried his profession into his daily life. It was refreshing to the young man to talk with him; it not only did the teacher good, but gave him the knowl-

edge of the community which he needed in order to labor with success.

"So far as religion is concerned," said the squire one evening, "this neighborhood is about as near dead as it can be without giving up the ghost. The last revival we had was over thirty years ago, when I was fetched into the church along with about twenty others."

"Who was your minister?"

"Doctor Hemingway—the same that we've got now; he was then quite a young man, and, no mistake, he did stir up things. He has aged a good deal in the last few years and really oughter give way to a younger man, but he hates to let go, and folks are so used to sleepin' under his sermons that they don't want any other preacher to wake 'em up."

"How often does he hold services?"

"When he's able he preaches every Sunday morning, and now and then comes to the mid-week prayer-meeting. Howsomever, he wasn't present more than five or six times last year; there isn't any excuse for me staying away, and when I go it's pretty sartin I've got to take charge and run things."

"How much attendance have you?"

The squire smiled and shook his head.

"Sometimes eight or ten; three weeks ago, though the night was clear and mild, the only person there beside Samantha and me was Dorothy Hemingway; she's the darter of the doctor and belongs to the salt of the airth," added the old man warmly, while the wife, calmly knitting, nodded in approval.

"Well," replied Dick, "the church has certainly got three live Christians in it."

"Who be they?" asked the unsuspicious squire.

"The young lady whom you have named and the man and wife who are good enough to give me a home."

It took a few seconds for this compliment to filter its way into the brain of the old farmer. As it was, he was a trifle later than his wife, whose faint smile showed that she understood the words.

"It's very nice in you to say that, but it's only half true. It hits Samantha right, but not me."

"Now, Silas," said his life partner; "you know it is all true, and what I have said ever since we met each other. Richard," she added, turning to the teacher, "we have

been married forty-three years and in all that time he has never said a cross word to me."

"For the good reason that you never said a cross word to me, or gave me any excuse for being disagreeable with you. May Heaven's choicest blessings rest on your dear gray head."

The husband stepped briskly across from his chair and patted his wife's scant, snowy hair. Then, as he sat down again, he remarked:

"To get back to our church; it has been dying for twenty years; I have seen it and prayed over it a great deal, and done all I could to wake it up. But what can you expect when two of its leading members are Lott Jorson and Allen Whitsett?"

"Who are they?"

"Jorson is keeper of the 'Traveler's Rest,' where he sells liquor to any one who wants it and does more than any ten men to corrupt the neighborhood."

Chandler was horrified.

"Why is he permitted to remain a church member? Has no one objected?"

"I have a good many times; I first talked with Lott; I tried to show him that what he was doing couldn't be made to square with

the profession of a Christian; I quoted from the Bible and named more than one person that had been ruined at his place through strong drink."

"What reply did he make?"

"It was the old excuse that I have heerd rumsellers give. Folks will drink—that is, some of 'em will—and it's better to let 'em drink in moderation, and give 'em the pure stuff. He never allowed a drunken man to have anything at his bar, and really was doing good in the community. If he stopped selling, another would come to take his place and more'n likely the man wouldn't be anything like as conscientious as him. It did seem to me that Lott really believed what he said."

"Did you let it rest there?"

"I went to Doctor Hemingway; he treated me very nice and listened to what I said. He told me he would be better pleased if Brother Jorson would close his place, but there was some force in what he said, and if he did stop the business, things might become a good deal worse; he was a liberal giver to the church, a kind-hearted man, and the doctor was afeard that if he was brought to trial before the official board, more harm

than good would be done. After that, I told Samantha I should quit."

Dick's face flushed.

"It is a burning shame! I shall connect myself with the church on the first opportunity; I shall try not to be rash, but I promise you that Brother Jorson will hear from me."

"It does me good to have you say that. If you can shut your eyes to the sinful business Lott is in and has been for a good many years—the tavern having come down to him from his father—he ain't such a bad fellow after all. He is liberal, and has done many kind things. I really feel more respect for him than I do for Deacon Whitsett."

"Who is he?"

"He keeps the grocery store at 'The Corners.' Allen and me was born in the same year, and have knowed each other all our lives. As a boy he was the meanest youngster I ever met. He was a sneak and tell-tale, and the stingiest one in school; it growed on him as he come to be a man. He married Kitty Werner, a modest, sweet girl, but with no more spunk than a kitten. They hain't got any children, and by his miserliness he has made himself by far the

richest man for miles around. He has mortgages on half a dozen farms, owns a pile of railroad stocks and bonds, but half starves himself and wife so as to save more money."

"He must contribute to the support of the church."

The squire caught the eye of his wife, who had resumed her knitting, and winked.

"Most folks think so, but me and Samantha knows different. Some years ago when our board was talking about the need of raising more money, the deacon said he favored the plan of putting all one's contributions into the basket as it was passed around: that was his rule, and he meant to stick by it. 'Every Saturday night,' said he, 'I prayerfully consider this dooty; according as the Lord has prospered me I lay aside my contribution, and put it in the box the next day.'

"Nobody could say anything ag'inst that and nobody did, but when I reported his remarks to Samantha, she become as suspicious as me. We didn't say anything to each other, but she and me made up our minds to watch. You see the deacon passes the contribution box up and down the left

aisle. His custom is, when he is all through and ready to lay down the offerings in front of the pulpit, to shove his thumb and forefinger into his vest pocket, as if taking out a coin, and dropping it into the basket. He makes sure that the whole congregation sees what he does. My pew is at the front, and Samantha, without seeming to do so, watched him mighty close. She and me become sartin that the deacon was using a little sleight-of-hand. When he dropped his thumb and forefinger below the lid of the box, there wasn't anything in them.

"The next Sunday was stormy and the congregation small. Of course the contributions didn't amount to much. I looked sharp into the basket, as the deacon passed it to Samantha who sat well back in the pew, and then in front of me next to the aisle. I seen everything it held: there was a quarter of a dollar, a dime, a nickel, and three coppers. They was spread out so I couldn't make any mistake. As my pew was the front one, the next thing the deacon done was to pause a few seconds, so as to make sure all seen him, when he shoved his thumb and finger into his vest pocket and went through his usual motions.

"After the benediction, I walked to the front, where the deacon had also gone to say something to Doctor Hemingway. Before the doctor came down from the pulpit, I peeped into the contribution box and seen the same six coins that was in it when it passed my pew. The deacon offered his hand to me, with his oily smile, and I said:

"'Deacon, I want you to clear up a mystery for me.'

"'What's that?' he asked, sort of surprised; 'I hope it ain't got anything to do with your lack of faith. Beware of that, Brother Silas.'

"'No; it isn't that; when you passed the contribution box into our pew, it held a quarter, a dime, a nickel, and three coppers. The mystery is what has become of the coin *you* put in.'

"Doctor Hemingway was coming down the pulpit steps and would be with us the next minute. The deacon spoke up prompt:

"'It must be, Silas, that *you* took out the quarter, for I put that one in, I'm sartin.'

"That ended my butting in, but it had one good result. After that on every Sunday the deacon did put in a coin; he knowed my eye was on him, and he made the money

jingle. From the sound I could tell it was a copper. Anyhow," added the squire with a grin, "the church gets about half a dollar each year more than it did before I asked the deacon to clear up the mystery for me. But let's talk of more pleasant things. Doctor Hemingway has been a widower for eight years, and his daughter Dorothy takes charge of the parsonage. She was graduated from Vassar last spring and we was all mighty glad to see her back with us ag'in, for, as I obsarved a while ago, she is of the salt of the airth."

"Will you explain more fully?"

"Well, she is one of them girls that is born good. She j'ined the church when she was only nine years old. Even before that, she had been doing her Christian works. She went among the poorest folks we have down in Bear Holler and took 'em food and medicine and clothes. She never missed a day when old Aunt Sarah, a colored woman, was in her last illness. Dorothy carried her good things to eat, sang hymns in her voice, which is like an angel's, and read from the Bible to her. The last words Aunt Sarah spoke was blessings on that child.

"That is only one of the hundreds of good

things she is always doing. Her father gives her a liberal allowance and she spends it all in charity and then coaxes more from him. She never was absent from our prayer-meetings, for when they was held a long way from the parsonage, I made it a rule to go after her and to see her home ag'in. She is modest and not too forward, but is never happy unless she is doing some kind act. I was a little afeard that when she went East to that big woman's college, it might sp'ile her, but it didn't hurt her a bit. The next day after she come home she dashed in here like a burst of God's sunshine and threw her arms about Samantha's and my neck. Then with her basket of good things she danced away to Bear Holler."

"And that isn't all she done," interposed the old lady.

"By no means, but what have you in mind, Samantha?".

"The Sunday-school."

"Sure enough; when I was a young man, we had a Sunday-school in charge of Brother Murdock, who done well with it; but, after he passed to his reward, it grew weaker and weaker till it died out altogether. Dorothy started right in to revive it. She went among

a lot of brothers and sisters asking them to help, but they all made excuses."

"Not all," gently interposed the wife; "*you* didn't."

"Bless my heart! Could I refuse anything that girl asked me? I told her I didn't know how to teach and oughter be in her primary class, but I didn't hold back; I go every Sunday, sure of seeing Dorothy there, and I do my best to teach them as don't know much, while she sort of superintends and has a Bible class, most of her scholars being old enough to be her mother."

"How many pupils have you?"

"Twenty-four when they're all there, an' now an' then she drums up a new one. Four of the boys and two of the girls are colored. When their mothers made excuse that their children hadn't good enough clothes to wear, she forced her father to give her money to fit 'em out nice and proper."

"What an example! Squire, I should like to join that school as teacher along with you."

"Oh, that's been fixed," airily replied the squire; "I had a talk with Dorothy to-day and told her all about you. She asked me to invite you to jine the Sunday-school."

"What reply did you make?"

"I said there wasn't any need of inviting you; it was right in your line, and she could count on your being on hand next Sunday afternoon. Was I right, Richard?"

"Never more so," was the warm reply.

CHAPTER VI

STARTING IN

THAT same evening, Dick called at the parsonage, which was a mile from the home of Squire Redwood, in the opposite direction from the schoolhouse. His first sight of the "manse," as some called it, impressed him favorably. Doctor Hemingway must have had means of his own, for the grounds were extensive and beautiful, and the building itself the finest for miles around.

Dick felt it proper to make his call instead of waiting for the clergyman. He walked briskly up the winding graveled walk, and stepping upon the broad porch, sounded the old-fashioned brass knocker. A young colored man answered the summons to whom the caller handed his card. A few minutes later, he was ushered into the library, where he met the man who, for many years, had been pastor of the Ampere church.

The two were mutually pleased. Doctor Hemingway was an old man, somewhat cor-

pulent, and dressed in sober black, the coat being of the "swallow-tail" variety. He wore a ruffled shirt, standing collar, and white necktie, all his clothing being scrupulously clean. He slipped his golden-rimmed spectacles back on the abundant white hair over his crown, and made two steps toward his caller, as he presented himself at the open door of his study.

Dick noticed that his face and eyes were as clear as those of an infant. The handsome face was clean shaven and the double chin nestled comfortably over the soft necktie. The hand which Dick grasped was as smooth as satin.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Chandler," said the clergyman, waving the young man to a chair; "indeed, I meant to drive down to Squire Redwood's to-morrow to pay my respects."

"That is kind, but I hardly expected it; I am fond of walking and should not have neglected my duty. If agreeable, I should like to join your church on the first day that will suit your convenience."

"Which will be the coming Sunday. I may say," added the doctor, "that I have heard of you from Squire Redwood."

"The squire is fond of talking," replied Dick, laughingly.

"Not only from him, but I have noted, in the official account of our church proceedings, that you have been licensed in the ministry. That is a pleasure to me in many respects, one of which is a selfish one. I am aging and feel the growing infirmities of body; I shall count upon you to occupy my pulpit quite often."

"I shall be glad to give you what help I can."

"I am sure you have received more than one call?"

"I have had several."

"May I ask why you did not accept any of them?"

"I am waiting for my Father to tell me which is my proper field. Meanwhile I have engaged to teach the Ampere public school for one year. By that time, I expect to be located."

"The experience cannot fail to be of great help. Moreover, I am sure that during the year you will be of much assistance to Ampere church and school."

"I cannot say as to that, but I feel that life is a vineyard and contains no room for

idlers; every man has work awaiting him, no matter where he turns. Squire Redwood told me that your daughter is conducting a Sunday-school; nothing can be more needed than that, and I wish to offer her my services."

"How that will please Dorothy! She never stops in her good works. Ah, if I had her youth, what a service I could do my Master!"

The old gentleman sighed and looked out of the window which opened on his broad lawn.

"Old age and its infirmities come to all, if they are not cut down before. The most active must, in the end, fold his hands and lay down his work; you have toiled through many years and borne the burden upon your shoulders."

"But weakly, my dear young man, weakly."

Turning his head toward the open door, the doctor raised his voice as he pronounced the name of his daughter. Her reply came from somewhere above stairs; her tripping step was heard and the next minute she entered the library. Dick had risen and took the little warm hand that was offered by her as the two were introduced.

"I expected you," she said, in her bright way; "if you hadn't come to-day, papa and I were going after you to-morrow."

"And what have I done," he asked in mock protest, "that Doctor Hemingway and his daughter should 'go after' me?"

"Not because of what you have done, but because of what you must do; the Ampere Sunday-school needs you."

"And shall get me; I think Squire Redwood said as much to you."

"He did, bless his heart; did you ever know a kinder and more lovable couple than he and his wife are?"

"Never."

"The Sunday-school will meet in your schoolhouse at two o'clock; will you be good enough to give notice to your pupils?"

He assured her it should not be forgotten and her face glowed.

"Isn't that splendid, papa! And how Mr. Chandler will help at the prayer-meetings! You are in need of rest, for you are a little older than I, and," she added, lowering her voice, though she knew the caller would hear every word, "you should make him preach for you as often as you can, though you needn't tell him I said so."

"Be assured, my daughter, that your advice shall be followed."

On the following Sunday, Dick Chandler sat in Squire Redwood's pew, conscious of the curiosity he roused among the congregation. The first week of the school—shortened at the beginning—had passed satisfactorily to himself. He knew from signs which could not be mistaken that he had won the affection of his pupils, and when that is the case, the good-will of the parents inevitably follows. He had awakened an interest in the children's studies; there had been no trouble regarding discipline, and on Friday, the last day of school, he had seven new attendants, with the knowledge that there would be more the following week.

The teacher was interested in the sermon of Doctor Hemingway. It was learned, enlightening, and instructive, but the young man could not shut his eyes to some of its defects. It was, in fact, too profound for a rural audience. As the expression goes, it was above their heads. It would have been an ideal discourse for a city congregation, or for one composed mainly of students and college professors. Moreover, every word was written, and the necessity of preserving

the exact focal distance for his glasses robbed it of the gestures and vigor that would have added much to its effectiveness.

Glancing around the large audience room, Dick noticed that it was not half filled.

When Deacon Whitsett solemnly leaned over, as he passed the contribution box into the pew of the squire, the latter glanced at Dick, with a flitting shadowy smile. Dick managed to preserve his sobriety, aided thereto by the grave countenance of Aunt Samantha, as he had come to call her; but, none the less, the same thought was in the minds of the three. The deacon did just as the squire had described: when about to lay down the basket in front of the pulpit, he thrust his forefinger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket and dropped a coin into the receptacle with as much jingling as if it were a double eagle.

At the close of the sermon Doctor Hemingway, removing his spectacles, said:

"It gives me much pleasure to make several announcements. We have been favored by Providence in the choice of a new teacher for our public school. Mr. Richard Chandler, who has taken charge, is a regularly licensed clergyman, who has declined several

highly complimentary appointments, in order to wait until certain of making no error in the selection of his field of labor. In the meanwhile, he will have charge of our school, as I have already stated.

"Brother Chandler does not intend to be an idler in his Master's vineyard. He has presented his certificate of membership in his home church. I shall read it to you and then extend to him the right hand of fellowship."

Adjusting his glasses, the doctor read the document, and Dick went forward and received a warm grasp of the pastor's hand. Without returning to his pulpit, the clergyman said:

"Brother Chandler will occupy this pulpit next Sabbath. I think," he added with a smile, "he has pretty good stuff in him, but I am not certain. So I hope every one of you, as well as our friends who are not with us to-day, will be present, in order to reach a decision on that point for yourselves.

"This afternoon at two o'clock the Sunday-school will meet in the schoolhouse. Brother Chandler will act as superintendent, assisted by my daughter and such other brothers and sisters as he may choose to call

upon. Every parent who has the good of his children at heart will see that they are present this afternoon promptly at the time named. Receive the benediction."

A surprise awaited Squire Redwood and Dick when they walked to the schoolhouse after dinner. As they passed down the long slope they saw fully fifty boys and girls, including several adults, assembled, although it was not yet two o'clock.

"We shall have a full house," remarked the squire.

"I suppose the novelty of the thing attracts them," was the modest reply of the teacher, whose heart was thrilled by the sight.

A still greater surprise met the two when they reached the school building. Every seat and most of the standing-room was filled. Those outside were there because they could find no room inside.

"What shall we do?" asked Dick in momentary dismay.

"If the day warn't quite so nipping we could hold the school in the open air; I'm afeard we can't do much teaching this afternoon; we'll have to git more roomy quarters after this."

The two managed to squeeze through the crowding throng, while a number were peeping into the windows. Dorothy Hemingway and several married ladies smilingly greeted the new superintendent. When he was able to reach his desk he spoke in a voice loud enough for all to hear. He expressed his gratitude for their coming, saying he had no thought of meeting so many. Then, after promising that accommodations would be secured the next Sunday for all who chose to come, and hoping to see every one before him and their friends also, he talked in a pleasant but serious strain, and dismissed them for the afternoon.

CHAPTER VII

TALENTS

AFTER Doctor Hemingway had made the opening prayer on the following Sunday, and had given out the notices, Dick Chandler stepped forward in the pulpit. His pulse beat faster than usual and he wondered if he should fail. But none of the men and women who looked expectantly up at him from their pews suspected the truth.

The young man had given much thought to his task. He had debated over the best line to follow. His conclusion was wise. The congregation was fully double that of the previous Sunday. Among them he noted the miserly Deacon Whitsett and Mr. Jorson, landlord of the "Traveler's Rest." For neither could he feel an atom of respect. He yearned to denounce both, or rather to frame his discourse in such burning words that they would cower before him. Nothing would have been easier than for him to rouse a tempest that would shake the Ampere

church to its foundations. It is quite likely that many a clergyman standing in his place would have done this, but Dick held himself firmly in check. The hour had not yet struck for such radical action. He must first gain the confidence of the people; it was his duty to speak privately to those who deserved condemnation. Public denunciation remained for the last resort.

The past week in school had borne good fruit. The attendance had grown until not a vacant seat was left. New accommodations would have to be provided. He had made the acquaintance of a number of parents, all of whom said appreciative words to him.

Several facts helped Dick that Sunday. In the first place, nature had given him grace, force, and quickness of thought. His voice was musical, and he spoke without notes. He had delivered the same sermon twice before, and there was no hesitation in his utterance.

His text was taken from the Saviour's parable of the men with talents, one of whom wrapped his in a napkin instead of adding to it.

"To every man, woman, and child God has intrusted a talent," declared Dick in his

most impressive manner; "to some it may be ten, and to others only five talents. Still a few have but the single talent, but you will note that the Saviour mentioned none to whom no talent was given. No matter how poor you are, so far as the world's goods are concerned, it is your privilege to speak the kind word, to encourage the weak, to smooth the brow of the sufferer, to cheer and help those who fall by the wayside, and to do one or more of the thousand of little things which often accomplish greater good than wealth alone."

This train of thought suggested the greater obligations of those who possessed material means. He pleaded so eloquently for generosity to all worthy causes that he clearly produced an effect upon his listeners. While there was nothing personal in his words, more than one hearer took them to himself. Deacon Whitsett seemed to feel that the preacher was hitting many of his neighbors, though the appeal rolled off his armor like rain from a roof.

Toward the close of the sermon, whose length Dick tactfully kept within moderate bounds, he leaned on the open Bible, looked down in the eyes of his listeners, every one

of which was fixed upon him, and in a low, impressive voice, asked:

"What are you and I doing with the talents God has given us? When you have finished your day's work and, sitting in your comfortable home, look back over the day, are you always able to recall a kind word you have spoken or some good deed you have done? Do not many days come and go without bringing you that blessed privilege? If you summon up the hours, rather are they not blurred by the hasty utterance that has stirred up anger? Have you not said something which, when it comes back to you in your lonely chamber, you would gladly unsay, if you could do so? Have you, in dealing with your fellow men, been truthful, honest, and generous? Have you checked the impatient retort that came to your lips? Have you, when reviled, refrained from reviling again? Have you dared to ask, 'What would Jesus do in my situation? Have I acted and spoken as He would have acted and spoken?' Ah, you and I know what answer truth would often compel us to make to these heart-searching questions.

"When at the close of the year we take account of stock, as the expression goes, does

not our conscience reprove us for the pittance we have returned to Him who gave us all that we possess? As we grow older, do we grow more charitable, more generous, more Christlike? Are we sleeping or waking? Are we going to seed and dying, instead of springing up into vigorous life?"

Again the speaker paused, and looked down into the upturned countenances. His voice was lower than before, but in the hush it reached the farthest corner of the room.

"Last Wednesday evening was clear and starlit; it was the ideal night for a stroll in the crisp October air; we have one hundred and fifty-four communicants in this church; and, not counting the members of Mr. Redwood's family, at whose house the prayer-meeting was held, there were just six present. Think of it!"

In order that all might think, the preacher was again silent for a full minute. Then he added:

"One of those six walked a greater distance than three-fourths of you would have to walk in coming to Brother Redwood's home, where you know you are more than welcome."

Dick did not glance at Dorothy Heming-

way when he said this. Had he done so, he would have seen the flush that stole over her cheek. Every man and woman in the church knew to whom he referred. He rather regretted what he had said, and made haste to shift the line of his remarks.

"The trustees have consented that next Wednesday's prayer-meeting shall be held in the basement of this church. If every one of you does his and her duty, it will be filled; if the room proves too small, they will let us use the main body of the church. I am glad to say the schoolhouse could not accommodate our boys and girls last Sunday. This afternoon, we shall meet in the basement. Is there any reason why you should allow any boy or girl of the right age to stay at home to-day? Is there any reason why you should stay at home? I may add that the school is greatly in need of a library. Instead of taking a collection in the church for the purchase of books, let's put our hands in our own pockets and buy them ourselves.

"The hymnals, the Bibles, and the Sunday-school lesson leaves will not supply one-half of those whom we shall meet this afternoon. You have not been called upon to

spend a penny in that direction, for all were the gift of your pastor, who has labored long and faithfully among you. He has well earned a rest; it is our duty to take the burden upon ourselves; for the talents which God has given us He will hold us to strict account. Shall we hand them back to Him on that awful day when all records are made up, and say: 'Here, Lord, I return my talents wrapped in a napkin'?"

Several causes inspired Dick in his appeal. The first and most gratifying was the ardent approval of Doctor Hemingway. Seated on the sofa behind the speaker, where most of the congregation were able to see only the crown of white hair, he often nodded, and spoke so loudly that nearly every one heard him. "Yes, yes!" he would say, followed now and then by "Amen!" or "True! God help us to see our duty!"

As the old man rose to his feet, he warmly shook hands with Dick and turned to his people:

"I wish I could add emphasis to what has been said, but I cannot; I approve from the depths of my soul every word excepting," added the doctor, "the reference to myself; let us not forget the appeal of my dear young

brother; let us not only heed what he has said, but act upon it."

"I tell you," chuckled Squire Redwood, when the three were seated round the dinner-table, "that sermon was one of the biggest successes of the year; you don't know all it did, Richard."

"I am sure you overestimate it," protested the young preacher.

"I observed one thing you didn't. After you was done, Deacon Whitsett was among them that gathered in front of the pulpit. I kept my eye on him and seen him slyly slip another coin in the contribution box, which you know was passed before the sermon."

"Did you see how much he put in?" asked the wife, with a smile.

"Yes; it was a half-dime: there's hope for the deacon."

CHAPTER VIII

GETTING TO WORK

WHILE Dick was hopeful over the results of his labor thus far, he avoided undue self-confidence. He could never forget the warning of Evangelist Moody to the effect that all seasons of revival are in danger of being followed by periods of reaction. When the waves rise high there are hollows between, and we must strive not to sink into them.

"There is a novelty in my methods which stirs their curiosity," said Dick to himself; "if I am not careful, they will fall away when that wears off; I must use only legitimate means."

That Sunday afternoon he found nearly a hundred children and adults greeting him at the old church. Decrepit Jimmy Cathers, the sexton, would not open the door until the arrival of the superintendent, who was ten minutes early. What was specially gratifying was the presence of eight or ten men in

middle life, most of whom came with their wives, while there were fully a score of boys and girls of too tender years to know much more than their alphabet.

"We must form them into a kindergarten class," said Dick, with some anxiety, to Miss Hemingway. "Where shall we find the teacher. I suppose you wish to keep your Bible class?"

"I have just the one for you."

"Who is she?"

"She is here, ready to take hold, and is the last person you would select. I will introduce you to her."

This brief chat took place after the people had entered the basement and found seats. Dorothy with a nod of her head called a middle-aged woman across the room to her. She was thin and homely of feature. Her face wore a stern expression. As she came up without the shadow of a smile, Dorothy introduced her as Mrs. Connell, a childless widow, who had taught a kindergarten school in an adjoining city some years before. She solemnly shook hands with Dick and remarked, in a sepulchral voice, that she was ready to give what help she could; after which she awaited orders.

"I appreciate your kindness, Mrs. Connell," said Dick, who, with all his confidence in the judgment of his young friend, could not help fearing she had made a mistake in this instance.

"There isn't any kindness about it; I am doing it for the Lord," was the response, in tones that sounded as if they came from the tombs. Dick was taken aback, but managed to reply:

"There can be no nobler motive, Mrs. Connell. You will wish to take the little ones by themselves, I presume?"

"I shall take them in a room apart from all disturbing noises."

"But where can we obtain such a room?"

"Upstairs, in the main body of the church."

"We haven't the permission of the trustees."

"That doesn't make any difference; I shall take them there."

And, bringing the little ones together, Mrs. Connell guided them upstairs, where they were distributed among the central pews. This remarkable woman more than justified what Miss Hemingway had said of her. Behind a mask of grimness and seeming

sourness of disposition, she hid one of the kindest of hearts, and she had that ability which is nothing less than genius, that enabled her to mold the children at will. Her discipline was perfect; she held the little ones enchained, and they sighed with regret when the bell of the superintendent summoned them downstairs for dismissal. Dick was delighted beyond measure, as week after week passed, with Mrs. Connell always at her post, with her pupils growing in numbers, and every evidence that, young as they were, they understood, in their childish way, the great truths she unfolded to them.

But this was only one of the surprises of that memorable Sunday. Among the first objects upon which his eyes rested was a handsome melodeon, at which Miss Hemingway seated herself.

"Where did that come from?" he asked her.

"I shouldn't wonder if Uncle Silas had something to do with it," she answered; "if you press him I don't think he will deny the charge."

"Just like him; one of the best men that ever lived."

"Don't forget Aunt Samantha."

"I shouldn't call her a man, but as a woman she is his equal."

"Mr. Chandler, let me introduce you to Mr. Asaph Jenkins, who has consented to be our leader in singing, and also to teach a class, if you need him."

The gentleman thus referred to stood directly behind Dick, who had to wheel about to grasp the palm extended to him. He was fully six feet tall, stoop-shouldered, gaunt, with sandy hair and chin whiskers, and a wide mouth that was filled with fine, sound teeth. He had a curious habit of smiling only on one side of his face, when he was pleased. He was plainly dressed, with unblacked boots, and a swallow-tail coat, from whose side-pocket a brilliant bandana handkerchief protruded.

Dick fairly winced under the tremendous pressure of the iron hand. The side of Mr. Jenkins' mouth glided farther round, revealing his sound molars, while his small gray eyes were almost hidden by the numerous wrinkles about and beneath.

"Mr. Chandler," said he, "I went to church this morning for the first time in two years; I liked your talk; what you said about a man hiding his talent hit me hard;

while I haven't many talents, I can sing a little, and under stress might do something in the way of teaching. That's what brings me here."

"I thank you very much; I am sure you will be of great help."

"I can't say as to that, but, if you are satisfied, and Providence permits, I shall be present every Sunday."

"And also at church and prayer-meeting?" asked Dick persuasively. Asaph Jenkins hesitated a moment, with the one-sided smile lingering, and then nodded his head, saying:

"Yes; it's a bargain."

"You don't know how much pleasure you give me."

"I know I'm giving myself a good deal more. Mr. Chandler, I may as well tell you I am an agnostic. I have read a good many theological books, have studied higher criticism, and have had no end of arguments with Doctor Hemingway and his daughter, who can hold her own in any debate. I remain unconvinced, and when you have the time to spare, I shall like to tackle you. All the same, I can't get away from a feeling that it is my duty to do something for

others: that explains why I'm here this afternoon."

Dick was drawn to this singular person, who, despite his unprepossessing appearance, talked like a man of education and intelligence. There was no opportunity to discuss the all-important subject at this time, for the school claimed attention. Jenkins began turning over the leaves of his hymnal, as he took his place beside Miss Hemingway, at the melodeon. The selection of a hymn was left to him, and he quickly fixed upon a familiar one.

Dorothy Hemingway played through the first part of the air, and then to Dick's surprise she ceased, and glanced expectantly at Jenkins, who stood facing the school, open book in hand.

And then he began. The teacher had listened to some fine singers; his own college had furnished a good many excellent ones, and he himself had a fine baritone voice. But never had he heard tones that arrested him as did those of Asaph Jenkins. Knowing his remarkable gift, Dorothy had no wish to mar the splendid volume which filled the large room, and the school sat enthralled, staring at the ungainly form which stood

before them and held all captive by his wonderful gift.

When the first stanza was finished, Jenkins stopped and, with his odd smile, said reprovingly:

"I didn't hear any of you sing."

"No wonder, when they had the privilege of listening to you!" exclaimed Chandler.

"Now, let's try the next stanza," added the singer, as if he had not heard the compliment. "But, if you don't join me, I shall stop."

Thus urged, the others tried, and before the last line was reached there was hardly a silent voice in the room. I should say, however, that there were two. Dorothy Hemingway and Dick Chandler glanced at each other and sat mute.

Two more hymns were sung, Dick offered a prayer, and then the organization of the various classes began. When this was under way, Jenkins said to Dick:

"I have one favor to ask of you, Mr. Chandler: I want you to make me up a class of eight or ten of the worst boys that are here to-day."

Dick looked his astonishment, Jenkins smiled.

"I mean it; I never saw or heard of a Sunday-school which didn't have a certain percentage of boys that are as mischievous and as bad as they can be; they make life a burden to the superintendent and instructor; I have known a class of such scamps to drive teacher after teacher away, and to fill their friends with despair. I have some ideas of my own about handling such youngsters. Give me a chance to experiment; perhaps I shall fail, but I'll do my best; angels could do no more."

Attracted by the strange personality of the man, Dick set to work to gratify him. The superintendent's restricted acquaintance outside of his own school made it hard to fix upon the most unruly lads, but Jenkins had spent years in the community and knew all the boys.

The first one chosen by him was a massive, hulking fellow named Buck Smith. He sat well back, grinning and flipping twists of paper at the heads of those within range, careless whether any one observed him or not. When Dick heard his name he remembered that he was the youth who was known throughout the neighborhood as the bully of the school, and who had boasted that

he would throw the teacher out of doors on the very first day of his attendance. He had not yet begun to attend.

The next lad was Ike Flynn. He was a year younger than Buck, whom he took for his model, and was sly, cunning, and tricky. When he was asked to take his seat beside Buck in the rear of the room, he eagerly did so, and waited for the fun to begin, for he was sure there was to be fun.

Finally, eight lads were brought together. Their ages ranged from thirteen to eighteen years, the last being that of Buck Smith. Looking into their faces, all alert for mischief, they might well cause a timid teacher to shrink.

"I know them all," said Jenkins in a low voice to Dick; "any one of them is enough to break up a camp-meeting. Now go off and leave them to me."

Dick, full of doubt, moved to another part of the room, where several matters required attention. He glanced to the rear now and then, to see how Jenkins was making out with his class. There were several minutes of disorder, and then the eight boys settled down, and, fixing their eyes on their teacher, listened to what he was saying. They sat

thus through the half-hour given to instruction. Not a hand was raised in mischief, nor was there a catcall, a pinch, or a laugh. The whole class hung on the words of the marvelous singer and original instructor.

CHAPTER IX

A SUBSCRIPTION PAPER

As the teachers and pupils filed out of the basement of the church, Dorothy Hemingway closed the melodeon and bade Dick Chandler and Asaph Jenkins good-by, with the remark to the latter:

"I shall see you at prayer-meeting?"

"You may depend upon it, provided you are there."

"No fear that she will be absent," Dick put in, as the girl passed out of the door.

Sexton Cathers showed a desire to lock the room, and the two sauntered outside. Dick accepted the invitation of Jenkins to spend an hour or more with him at his home. As they strolled along, the teacher learned several interesting facts regarding his new friend. He was a graduate of Yale, but had taken up no profession. He had traveled abroad, and being left a competence by his father, had bought a small farm in the Ampere district, and rented it to a practical

husbandman, with whom he made his home. Jenkins was a bachelor, with a large library, and spent his time in working on the place when so disposed—which he confessed was not often—and in reading, investigation, and study, rarely going out during the evenings. He had never attended a prayer-meeting since leaving college, and, as he said, had not stepped inside a church for more than a year. Curiosity to hear what the young preacher had to say had led him there to-day.

"I am a seeker after truth," he explained. "Certainly no more important subjects can engage the thoughts of men than immortality, religion, God, and one's duty to his fellow-creatures. I have read much. I believe—at least partially—in an existence beyond the grave, but in the absence of scientific proof, I am not free from doubts. There are so many conflicting creeds and beliefs, I see so much hypocrisy and inconsistency in the lives of those professing to be followers of the meek and lowly One, that I am often wholly at sea. I do not wish to enter into an argument with you this afternoon, beyond saying that I stand baffled, awed, and in despair amid the mysteries that wall me in on every side."

"Why let them vex you?" asked Dick. "There is nothing in this world which we can understand through and through, from the beginning to the end. The nature of God, life, death, eternity, are beyond, and will always remain beyond the ken of finite minds. No one can explain the mystery of a blade of grass; Edison cannot tell you the nature of electricity; the presence of sin and suffering in the affairs of life, light, color, sound, sight, mind, matter, are as incomprehensible to you as to a child. Why not, therefore, cease the impossible task of understanding everything and hold fast to these facts?

"Our existence proves that we must have a Creator, whose nature cannot be understood by us so long as we are in this life. Every sane and intelligent human being has within him two warring natures: the sinful and the regenerate, the latter of which is the same mind and spirit as was in Christ. The most perfect form of government ever conceived for the happiness of man is that given to the world by Jesus of Nazareth, and its simplicity brings it within the comprehension of the wayfaring man. I repeat, why not abandon, therefore, all this blind,

baffling, groping effort to solve the unsolvable mystery, and come down to the bed-rock of childlike obedience to the teachings of the lowly Jesus? If we are wrong, we cannot possibly lose anything by our belief, and will surely add to our own happiness and to the happiness of others. Suppose those who differ with us are right; they will gain nothing, while, if they are wrong, they will lose everything. Gladstone said that during his long career he came in contact with sixty of the greatest intellects in the world. Of these, all but six were believers in immortality and the truths of Christianity. If we err in our faith, we surely are in good company."

"You have started me on a new train of thought," replied Jenkins, "and I promise you to follow it with an open mind."

"That is all I ask; do so in the right spirit, and God will lead you to the light which you are so anxious to find."

"Leaving all this for the present, let us come down to practical things. You announced this morning that you were about to solicit a subscription, from the members, for the purpose of buying a library for the Sunday-school. Let us start it now."

"There can be no better time. Suppose you draw up the paper."

Jenkins took a blank sheet from his desk, and hastily wrote a pledge, whereby the signers agreed to pay the sums opposite their respective names for the purpose set forth. He subscribed ten dollars and Dick promptly did the same.

"I will take this paper through the neighborhood," offered Jenkins, "and make a shaking among the dry bones. How much ought we to raise?"

"Seventy-five or a hundred dollars will buy us a good library."

"I'll guarantee a hundred and shall try to obtain double that; I know everybody, and the man who gets away from me will feel mighty uncomfortable. Doctor Hemingway will give as much as each of us."

"So will Squire Redwood."

"That makes nearly one-half of the larger amount you named."

"Miss Hemingway will equal her father's contribution. Of course, it comes from the old gentleman, but it will please him and form a part of our grist."

"Do you intend to tackle Deacon Whitsett?"

"The chance of doing so is one of my chief reasons for wishing to take charge of this contract. And," added Jenkins, with a chuckle, "there are others."

"When will you begin?"

"To-morrow morning; I sha'n't overlook a person who ought to give. I shall even call upon Landlord Jorson, chiefly for the purpose of airing my views upon certain matters that will interest him. Isn't he a fine specimen of a member of a Christian church?" asked Jenkins, with a sniff of contempt.

"I sympathize with your feelings and mean that he shall hear from me before many moons wax and wane. By the way, Mr. Jenkins, you have the finest tenor voice I ever heard."

"That's extravagant, Mr. Chandler, but I won't deny that it has received a few compliments, and I reckon it is a pretty fair voice."

"It must have attracted wide attention."

"Oh, yes; I have received several flattering offers," Jenkins informed him, "but I do not care for public life. I shall never sing outside of Ampere."

"No one can measure the good you will

do here. It may be your calling to become a Sankey."

"And yours to become a Moody."

"I do not feel competent for that, since he has gifts that can never be mine. It is my opinion, Mr. Jenkins, that God has given you ten talents in that voice of yours."

The young man threw back his head and laughed heartily. Shortly after this Dick left for home.

As soon as Squire Redwood was told of the subscription for the library he said:

"Of course I shall give the same as you and Asaph, and more, too, should it be necessary. He's the very man to go through the neighborhood with that paper; he has plenty of time and isn't afraid to say what he thinks."

"By the way, Squire, Miss Hemingway told me you bought that melodeon for the Sunday-school."

"Did she say that? Well, she's mistook; I didn't buy it."

"Come to think, she said you had a hand in it."

"Ah, that's different; she and me chipped in, though if I had knowed that Asaph in-

tended to sing, I shouldn't have throwed away my money."

"He has promised to help at each Sunday-school session and at our prayer-meetings."

"It seems almost too good to believe; I have asked him many times to do that, or, at least, to come to church and lead the choir, but he always smiled in that odd way of his, and shook his head. He didn't question Doctor Hemingway's piety, but said his preaching did him no good, and he didn't know of any preacher that he had any use for. That wonderful voice will be a powerful help to us."

Asaph Jenkins started out directly after his morning meal upon the task of securing subscriptions for the new Sunday-school library. He first went to Doctor Hemingway, who cheerfully put down his name and handed over the money for which he had signed. When he had done so, he called Dorothy into the library.

"See what I have been doing, daughter," he said, as she greeted the caller.

"And set too good an example for me to lose," she replied, as she took the pencil from Asaph and wrote her name below that of her parent. "Papa, I'm a little short this

morning, and shall have to borrow from you."

"Just as I expected," said the good old man, as he returned her caress; "I don't suppose there is any help for it."

"It has that look," smiled Jenkins, as he pocketed the second bill. "What a blessing it is to have such a daughter as yours."

"It truly is, and no father could be more thankful."

The canvasser's next call was at the home of Squire Redwood. Dick had gone to his school, so the two men were alone.

"I've heerd of this," remarked the squire, as he adjusted his spectacles and glanced over the paper; "I shouldn't have forgiven you if you had overlooked me."

"Nobody would be so short-sighted as that, when he needed help in a good cause. I tell you, that young Chandler is stirring up things in this neighborhood."

"Richard is just the man to do it; it was a good day for Ampere when we engaged him for a teacher. He tells me you have promised to aid in our Sunday-school and at our prayer-meetings."

"Yes; I have enlisted; I like him; he is doing a much-needed work."

Squire Redwood laid his hand on the shoulder of his caller as he rose to go.

"Asaph, one of these days you and me have got to lay down and die. If we have time to think over the past we shall remember a good many things that will make us feel mighty sorry. There will be some, too, that we shall be glad we done and regret because we didn't do more of 'em. Among the matters that you'll never feel bad over will be your using that voice of yours to help sinners into the good way."

"I won't say you are not right, Squire," replied Jenkins in a slightly tremulous voice; "I wish everything was as clear to me as it is to you."

"It will be one of these days; I know my prayers for you will be answered."

"Shall I tell you what has come nearer to making me get down on my knees than anything else?"

"I should like to know."

"The example set by you and your wife, by Miss Hemingway, and now by the new teacher: they make a more powerful sermon than Spurgeon or Beecher or Moody ever preached. Well, thanks for your subscription, and good-morning."

Having secured five names with ten dollars against each, Jenkins strode to "The Corners," and entered the big grocery store of Deacon Whitsett. It was the time of day when there was a lull in trade. Tom, the round-cheeked boy, who helped in selling goods, was weighing sugar in two-pound packages, so as to have them convenient for customers. His employer was closely watching him.

"Take a pinch out; you've got a leetle too much sugar."

"The scales just balance," replied Tom, as he obeyed orders; "and the wrapping paper weighs something."

"And costs something too: that's about right. You didn't forget to dampen the sugar before weighing it — Ah, good-morning, Asaph!" added the merchant, hearing the footstep and wheeling around, "you don't come into the store often."

"No; I leave the purchasing to Mr. Burleigh and his wife; I don't have to bother with such things, thank fortune."

"Anything I kin do for you this morning?"

"Yes; put your name to that paper," curtly replied Jenkins, handing the folded sheet

to the merchant, who, leaning against the counter, peered through his glasses, his lank jaws working energetically, as if he were chewing something, though his teeth were few and defective. Jenkins stood two or three paces away with his eyes on the thin, hard countenance. Tom grinned, while he continued weighing and wrapping the sugar. He suspected what was in the wind, and when Jenkins glanced his way he winked.

"What's this?" suddenly asked the deacon, dipping his head forward, like a bull about to attack, while he glared over the top of his spectacles.

"I thought I wrote that plain enough for any one to read. You heard Mr. Chandler give notice yesterday that a new library is to be bought for the Sunday-school by means of subscriptions."

"I don't approve of such things," said the deacon sourly.

"Don't approve of having good reading for our children?" demanded the solicitor, recoiling a step as if in astonishment.

"I don't mean that; but this way of raising money is wrong."

CHAPTER X

"THE TRAVELER'S REST"

ON his way to the store of Deacon Whitsett, Asaph Jenkins had braced himself for the "run in," as he expressed it, which he was sure he would have. He was so impatient with meanness in any form, and felt so much contempt for the miser, that it was hard to restrain himself, but he succeeded quite well in doing so.

"What is wrong about this method of raising money for a good cause?" he asked.

"I don't know as it's wrong for them as believes in it, but my principle is to put into the contribution basket each Sunday what is right fur me to give to the church. In my jedgment, that is the only proper way of doing such things. Each Saturday I prayerfully consider as to how the Lord has prospered me and contribute according."

"You must have a mighty poor way of calculating your profits. You have mortgages on half a dozen of the best farms in

the county, and all that you drop into the basket each morning is an old-fashioned copper."

"What do you know about it? You don't 'tend church," demanded the deacon indignantly.

"I have been told by those who watch you; but we are getting off the subject. The whole amount of your gifts to church causes isn't one dollar a year, and you are the richest man in the county."

The deacon chewed hard and his cadaverous face flushed.

"You've no right to talk to me like that: it ain't Christian."

"Well, I am not a professing Christian like you, so I shall say what I think. I want your pledge on that paper for ten dollars. Of the five names there, you are the best able to give that amount. You will never feel it, and it will do you more good than sanding your sugar, watering your vinegar, and adulterating your other goods."

Before the deacon, whose temper was fast rising, could reply, Jenkins pursued another method.

"Your name will lead others to imitate you. Come now, suppose you put it down

and I pay nine dollars for you, giving you credit for the ten; what do you say?"

The deacon was staggered for the moment by the novel proposition. Still chewing his invisible cud, he reached out his hand, took back the paper which he had returned and studied it again. Jenkins remained silent while the other hesitated. Suddenly yielding to a spasm, the deacon carried the sheet to his desk, laboriously wrote his name and marked "ten dollars" in figures opposite it, as the others had done. His hard face wrinkled into a grotesque smile.

"Very well; stop in next week and I'll hand you the dollar, if trade picks up."

Asaph Jenkins made sure of the signature and figures; then he refolded the sheet and thrust it into the pocket inside his coat. Jerking one of the high stools forward, he sat down upon it and looked straight into the face of the old man.

"Deacon," he quietly asked, "do you think it is right to lie?"

"Why, of course not; it ain't justifiable in any sarcumstances; it's contrary to what the Good Book says."

"Yet you have consented to a direct lie; you have put your name on that paper, and

thereby pledged yourself to give the sum of ten dollars, expecting me to pay nine-tenths of it for you."

"Oh, that's different," replied the deacon with another attempt to smile; "it was your idee—not mine."

"But you are a party to it, and are perfectly willing that I should commit a sin provided you get the benefit."

"Wal, if you feel that way about it, I'll cross off my name."

"No; you won't; you have promised to give ten dollars for the new library, and I am going to make you do it."

The deacon's jaw dropped, and he stared as if he could not grasp the situation.

"I mean it," added Jenkins; "if necessary, I shall take the matter into court and you won't be able to wriggle out of it."

"But—but," stammered the old man, swallowing hard, "you agreed to give nine dollars, if I'd put down my name for ten; it was a fair bargain."

"I didn't agree to anything of the kind; I asked you if you would do such a thing, but didn't say *I* would; upon considering the matter, I have decided not to be a party to such a wicked deception."

"It's a cheat; it's dishonest; you can't get out of it!" exclaimed the deacon, fully roused and trembling with indignation; "it's onspeakably mean and contemptuous of you, Asaph!"

"If you refer to your own action I agree with you."

Jenkins had risen to his feet. He shook his forefinger at the irate deacon and lowered his voice, though the grinning Tom did not let a syllable escape him.

"You will pay that ten dollars and you will do it within twenty-four hours. If I don't receive the cash now or your check within that time, I shall back a certain man well known to you, who is eager to open a new grocery store at 'The Corners,' and within a few weeks after he does so he will have most of your trade. I'm not bluffing; I have the matter under consideration. That's all; good day."

"But hold on!" pleaded the scared deacon, hurrying from behind the counter; "you won't do me such a dreadful injury, I'm sure; it will ruin me."

"Wait and see if I don't; I have nothing more to say."

And he strode through the door and off the

porch, leaving the old man staring speechless after him.

Beyond sight of the store, Asaph Jenkins slackened his pace and shook with laughter.

"I haven't had more fun since I had the mumps. I wouldn't have missed that interview with the deacon for ten times his subscription. I don't know that I was perfectly frank with him, but I can't feel bad over the matter. Neither did I promise not to back Mr. Green in opening a new grocery store at 'The Corners,' even if the deacon paid his subscription, but I'll wait till I get it."

Jenkins received Deacon Whitsett's check the next day, accompanied by a scrawling bit of writing, reminding the younger man that he was to discourage any new enterprise which would conflict with the deacon's interests.

"How it wrung his heart," grimly muttered Jenkins. "Somehow or other I feel more inclined to back Green than before. I think I shall do it."

Asaph Jenkins did not use his saddle horse in making his circuit of Ampere district. He cut across lots in many places, thereby saving time and effort; but he was fond of walking and the exercise did him

good. He had skimmed the cream, and now went after the milk. By the middle of the afternoon he had run up his list to an even hundred dollars, with a number of other promising villagers to call upon. The subscriptions ranged from five dollars down to one-fifth of that sum. The solicitor was touched by the readiness with which the men and women subscribed. They gave according to their means and were glad to do it.

"We shall hardly reach one hundred and fifty dollars," he reflected; "I'll make up the amount and say nothing to anybody."

Jenkins had reserved the "Traveler's Rest" as the last place to visit that afternoon. The sun was low in the sky when he pushed open the door of the bar-room and entered. Two farmers were in the act of drinking, and he stood in the background until they wiped the backs of their hands across their mouths, sat down in the rickety chairs, and lit their pipes.

Lott M. Jorson was a short, thick-set man, with hard features, which he could relax when he thought there was reason to do so. He had a bushy head of hair, a smooth-shaven face, and was always well dressed. He set the bottle back on the shelf behind

him, took the two tumblers that had been emptied, stooped down and rinsed them in a pail of water under the bar and placed them dripping and inverted on a lower shelf. Then he looked at his caller, who was standing motionless and watching him.

"Hello, Jenkins, what'll you have?"

"Your name to that paper."

As he spoke, Jenkins drew out the folded sheet, stepped closer to the bar, and handed it to the landlord. The latter was not old enough to require spectacles, and he unfolded the document, remarking as he did so:

"If it's a petition to hang you, I won't lose any time in writing my name at the head of the—others—eh?"

Jenkins did not comment upon this cheap wit, but calmly waited. Carefully reading the list of names, the landlord suddenly puckered his lips and whistled.

"Deacon Whitsett, eh? That beats all creation, and ten dollars, too! Well, well, it's the most wonderful thing I ever knowed: do you b'lieve he'll pay up?"

"He will pay," said Jenkins, gently; "how much do you wish to give?"

"You see things ain't moving very well with me; crops haven't been good the past

season and the folks are poor. Still, I believe in encouraging everything that helps uplift the community. I was much pleased with that discourse of the new teacher, or preacher, yesterday; I'm sure it done us all good."

"It certainly ought to. You remember what he said about raising the funds for a new library by subscription. I have spent most of the day at that work."

"And have done well—no mistake. I s'pose you'll buy books of the right kind," added Jorson inquiringly, as he took a stub of a pencil from his waistcoat pocket and wrote his name, with the figure "three" opposite.

"I think Mr. Chandler and I can be trusted to do that," commented Jenkins, accepting the three soiled one-dollar bills which the landlord fished out from his fat wallet and handed to him. "I have a very interesting book in my library which I shall donate to the school."

"What might it be?"

"T. S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar Room;* if you will promise to read it, I'll send it to you."

The landlord's face flushed.

"I've heerd of that book, but I don't think it's right to encourage such fanatics; they do a big lot more harm than good; better not excite the children by letting them read it."

"Then you are in favor of allowing our boys to grow up ignorant of the danger they run from strong drink? You know that rum slays its tens of thousands every year and does more than all other causes to fill our state prisons."

"Yes, ain't it too bad? If all the men who handle spirits was as conscientious as me there wouldn't be anything of that kind."

"Tell me how you work in your conscience on this business."

Landlord Jorson's face flushed, and he was plainly irritated, which was what his caller intended he should be.

"Why, I put my conscience in everything, which is more'n some persons I could name does: I sell the best liquor, and never let children or minors have it; when I see a man has all that's good for him, I don't let him have any more. You know as well as me that folks will drink and you can't stop 'em by all the prohibition and local option laws on the statoo books. Therefore," added the

landlord triumphantly, "the true temperance plan is to drink in moderation, using the best kind of liquor, such as I use. How are you going to get away from that?"

"I have heard such stuff before; you don't pretend to deny that drunkenness is the most awful curse of civilization——"

"Of course not, and nobody is more opposed to it than me."

"The Bible, of which perhaps you have heard, denounces it in the most forceful language. There couldn't be any drunkenness if there was nothing to make people drunk. You have done and are doing more harm in the community than the worst thief and incendiary out of jail."

Jorson's gray eyes flashed.

"I won't allow any man to talk to me like that in my own place," he cried.

"You can't help yourself; and I shall add a few more things. To the burning disgrace of the Ampere church, it has permitted you for years to be one of its members —you whose life is a violation of the plainest teachings of the Founder of Christianity. By-and-by, when I become a good deal better man than I am now, I shall join the church, and the first thing I shall do to prove

my sincerity will be to bring charges against you. We shall then decide how much you are doing to 'uplift the community.'

"Ten years ago, Owen Palmer was among the brightest young men in the Ampere district. He married one of our finest young women, and a lovely little girl was born to them. Palmer is now a miserable drunkard; when I remonstrated with him some time since, he told me that the first glass of liquor he ever drank was in this place, and you served it to him. That's what you call 'uplifting the community.'

"Do you suppose I had any intention of keeping your money when I took it from you? Not for a moment; it is tainted; it is poison, and it burns my hand. Keep it!"

Asaph Jenkins had rolled the bills into a small wad, which he flung into the face of the landlord, who stared aflame with anger but dumb. Then the caller strode out of the door and slammed it after him.

CHAPTER XI

THE SCHOOL BULLY

As winter came on, the smaller pupils of the Ampere school withdrew, and their places were taken by older ones. Large boys, as a rule, are kept at home in the country during the summer months, in order to help on the farms, while the long walk and severe weather thin out the attendance of the girls and smaller lads. Thus the few extra seats and desks which had been put in, served for the new pupils.

One wintry morning, when Dick stepped out of the front door of Squire Redwood's house, a flake of snow softly touched his cheek. Before he could pass down the short walk to the front gate the air was full of eddying particles, and in less time than would seem credible roads and fields were hidden under the white sheet.

Dick was delighted. The life-giving ozone as it filled his lungs thrilled him with the bounding pleasure of high health. He

broke into a run which he kept up half the way to school. By that time his blood was tingling, his cheeks were ruddy and cold, and it required great self-restraint to check his longing to shout. He wore no overcoat, and threw back the breast of his heavy coat, that he might breathe freely. He took long strides, and swung his arms in the exuberance of physical joy.

"I should be glad if the schoolhouse were twenty miles away this morning," he muttered.

The heavy fall slackened as he walked, but when he came in sight of the building the earth was covered to the depth of several inches. The weather was so mild that the snow was wet and cloggy.

Dick saw that all the school children were outside, shouting, laughing, washing one another's faces, hurling the missiles to and fro, surging back and forth, and enjoying themselves to the full. He paused several minutes to watch them, and was about to mingle in the sport, when whizz! a big snowball banged against the side of his head. He laughed and looked around that he might retaliate.

As he did so, he observed for the first time a new pupil among the boys. He was

the huskiest lad that had yet attended the school and loomed up like a young giant. At the first glance Dick recognized him as Buck Smith, the bully of the neighborhood, who had repeatedly given notice of his intention to "bounce" the new teacher.

With not the least sign of resentment, Dick squatted and began moulding the snow with his hands. He shaped three balls, and pressed the snow as tightly as he could, meanwhile keeping an eye on his antagonist. He saw Buck's yellow teeth as he grinned, in anticipation of the fun about to open. At the same moment, the teacher identified Ike Flynn, standing to one side and somewhat nearer than Buck. There was a general cessation of play on the part of the other boys, that they might enjoy the snowball battle.

Buck quickly showed that he was a fine thrower. He was pitcher of the famous Ampere ball team, and was noted for his skill in sending the sphere accurately over the plate, or to any of the players. But Dick's home position on the champion college team was at third base, and the brilliant style in which he used to line the ball over to first was one of the finest treats of the game.

If the teacher hadn't flirted his head to one side he would have received the second missile from Buck in the face. Before the youth could aim again, Dick threw, and Buck had to drop his head and instantly twist to one side. When Dick rose upright, he held two hard snowballs in his left hand, and while the third was speeding through the air, he snatched one of the extra ones and shot it with all his power, and with the accuracy of a rifle ball, at his enemy.

The contestants stood some twenty-five yards apart, an excellent distance for throwing, and one which required wonderfully dexterous dodging to escape harm. Buck was in the nick of time to elude the first one, but was unprepared for the second. Not expecting it, he was trying to poise himself for another throw, when the ball from the teacher impinged against his closed mouth with so much force that he staggered backward and came near losing his balance. Before he could aim again, the third ball hit him squarely in the forehead. Then the teacher squatted once more, and began pressing the snow between his hands, not forgetting to keep keen watch on Buck.

A general shout went up from all the boys

except Buck and Ike Flynn. The sympathies of the pupils were with the teacher, and they were glad to see the bully checked so decisively. Buck, however, was by no means defeated. He was furiously angry, and with a burst of profanity he called to his friend:

"Soak him, Ike; let's drive him into the schoolhouse!"

Ike began hurriedly shaping snowballs. Buck retreated several steps and Dick followed. Still advancing, he feinted to throw; then with the quickest movement of which he was capable, the teacher sent one ball after the other. Buck escaped them by dropping flat on his face in the snow, but he was in so much haste that he needed a few seconds in which to pack the balls he had started to mold. Dick was as rapid as he, and when he straightened up he again had two in his left hand and one in his right.

Dreading what was coming, Buck turned and ran a few paces, so as to make it easier for him to dodge. He was as resolute as ever to keep up the fight. Dick whipped back his right arm and threw the ball with might and main, but he did not aim at Buck. He saw Ike Flynn in the act of launching his missile, in obedience to the orders of the

"CAUGHT IT ON THE END OF HIS KNOBBY NOSE."

bigger bully, and though the teacher's attention seemed fixed upon the latter, he really aimed at Ike. This unsuspicious youth caught it on the end of his knobby nose, and with a howl of pain dropped the ball he was about to throw, pressed his hands against his face, and staggered to one side.

Chandler started on a trot toward Buck, who stood his ground and viciously hurled the ball at his opponent, who, seeing that it would strike his chest, allowed it to do so, without attempting to dodge. Like the teacher, Buck had two more snowy spheres ready, and snatching one from his left hand he threw again at the teacher. And then took place a singular thing, the like of which isn't seen once in a thousand snowball battles.

Each threw a missile in the same instant, and each was aimed with unerring accuracy. They met squarely in mid-air and the two were shattered to fragments. Buck didn't understand it, but the teacher did. While the other was gaping in bewilderment, the next ball arrived a little ahead of time, and Buck received it again in the face, whereupon he whirled about and ran to get out of range of the bombardment.

"If you won't stand your ground, there's

no fun in this," called Dick, turning and hurrying to the school building, into which he passed before either of the boys clearly understood his action.

"He makes believe it's time to open school," growled Buck to Ike, who managed to force a grin on his battered countenance; "but he's afeard of us."

"I don't see what he's afeard of," called Billy Brown, who therein expressed the sentiments of the others; "he come near knocking both your heads off; he'd done it too if you hadn't run."

"You've got too much to say, nosey," shouted the angry Buck; "take that!"

And before Billy knew what was coming, he was struck by one of Buck's missiles in the side. He gasped with pain, pressed a hand against his ribs, and bravely forced back the impulse to cry. The teacher, who was standing in the door and ringing the bell, saw the cruel act and his eyes flashed, but he said nothing that any one heard.

"I shall have to conquer that brute, and when I do so, he'll stay conquered; the same may be said of Flynn, though he isn't half so ugly."

Having rung the bell, the teacher stepped

back to his desk. A warm fire was burning in the stove, where it was kindled early each morning by the Irishman with whom Dick had made a contract to attend to the sweeping and heating. The teacher assumed a look of indifference, as if the struggle in which he had just taken part was an every-day occurrence. None the less he instinctively felt that trouble was coming. He determined to force matters.

When he saw how Billy Brown was suffering, and how bravely he tried to hide it, Dick's heart ached. Before opening the exercises, he spoke from his chair to the boy in his seat, a few paces away. Buck and Flynn, without making any inquiries, had occupied places on the other side of the room, as far from the desk as possible.

"What is the matter, Billy?"

"Nothing," was the whimpering reply.

"Has anybody hurt you?"

The boy did not answer. He was rubbing his eyes and striving hard to keep back the tears that would come. The teacher rose to his feet.

"I think I saw Buck Smith hit you with a snowball: is it that which hurts you?"

"It doesn't hurt much; I'll soon get over

it," said Billy, who was afraid of rousing the ill-will of the bully.

"Any one who would do a thing like that is a big coward; I don't wonder that he ran away from me; I repeat that Buck Smith is a miserable, sneaking coward, and if he doesn't ask your pardon before all the school I shall give him the biggest thrashing of his life."

Buck couldn't believe he heard aright, while Ike Flynn sat dumb. Could it be that this was the individual whom Buck meant to fling out-of-doors? How he had longed for this hour during the past weeks! He had driven two teachers from the district, and wouldn't he do it again? What a glorious opening!

Dick stood quietly beside his desk. His face was a shade paler than usual, but his voice was low and even. He looked from Billy to Buck.

"Are you sorry for hurting a small boy like that?" asked the teacher of the red-faced bully.

"Me sorry!" snarled the latter. "Wal, it would taken seventeen teachers and a half like you to make me sorry."

As he spoke, he sprang up, and doubling

his fists and compressing his swollen lips, advanced upon Dick. Ike Flynn hardly breathed, but held himself ready, provided his courage held out, to go to the help of his hero.

Standing thus, in the clear space in front of his desk, Dick calmly awaited the attack of the bully. He knew he was his master. He could subdue the hulking fellow as easily as he could lay Billy Brown or Harry Taggart across his knee. One blow, such as the athlete knew how to strike, would fell Buck like an ox stricken by the ax of the butcher. Dick had conquered more than one powerful student in college who was known for his skill with the gloves, but he resolved that he would not strike the fellow before him, nor do him bodily harm, unless an unexpected turn in the collision should force him to do so.

The hush of the tomb fell upon the school. All the boys and girls were scared, and watched the couple with breathless intensity of interest. They expected to see a rough-and-tumble fight, in which the teacher would get the worst of it.

When directly in front of the waiting instructor, Buck struck viciously at him—so

viciously indeed that he grunted, and Dick felt the wind of the blow which grazed his face. He had parried it with his right hand, and he now shot forward his left, and seized the cotton necktie which encircled Buck's throat. Then was the moment when he could have used his other hand with a force that would have stretched his foe unconscious on the floor. Instead of doing so, he held his left arm as rigid as a bar of iron, his fingers between the tie and the thick neck.

"Why don't you hit me?" asked Dick tantalizingly. "You can't do it."

The bully swung both arms, but they beat empty air. His fists came close to the cheek of the teacher, but, because of the superior length of that immovable arm, they did not quite reach him. Buck grasped the arm, and strove desperately to twist the grip loose. He might as well have tried to bend the limb of a mountain oak.

The pressure on the necktie slowly tightened. Dick gradually turned his wrist over, and Buck began to find a difficulty in breathing. Before his wind was wholly shut off, and while he was panting from his efforts, he called chokingly to his comrade:

"Ike, why don't you help me?"

The teacher glanced over Buck's shoulder at the other boy, who was hesitating, but about to answer the appeal.

"I haven't struck Buck," said Dick warningly; "if you come within reach, I'll strike you!"

"I hain't got nothing to do with this fight!" muttered Flynn, sinking back into his seat; "fight it out yourselves."

Again that relentless stricture on Buck's throat increased. He kicked fiercely with one foot, but with the first essay the teacher seized the ankle like a flash and slowly forced him back over one of the benches nearest the stove. Buck was helpless.

In his distress, he closed both hands around the wrist at his throat, and strove to release himself. Dick held him a moment thus, carefully watching the signs. The youth was at his mercy.

When Buck dropped his hands, the master allowed him to breathe, and asked in his quiet voice:

"Have you had enough?"

The stubborn fellow was not ready to yield, and instantly renewed the struggle, but it was useless. That fearful left hand

closed as fixedly as before, and the wrist began slowly turning. When Buck could barely speak, he gasped:

"I've got enough; lemme go; I won't hurt you."

"I don't think you will; I am not ready to release you; you must first ask pardon of Billy Brown."

At this the younger lad became hysterical. With the tears streaming down his cheeks he broke into laughter and called:

"Oh, I don't care, Mr. Chandler; don't kill him."

"I shall not let him go until he asks your forgiveness."

"I'll die first!" exclaimed the purple-faced Buck, renewing his struggles with such sudden fury that he came within a hair of freeing himself.

"As you please," replied the teacher, giving an extra twist to the handkerchief.

And then Buck collapsed.

"Lemme—go—I'll—do—it!"

Dick withdrew his hand and stepped back, allowing his victim to straighten up, but his conqueror was alert. Buck stood sullen and with eyes downcast. Then he turned to take his seat, but the teacher jerked him back.

"Not until you have done as you promised."

The bully was silent for a few seconds. He was swallowing the bitterest dose of his life. Then, with a sheepish grin, he looked at the little fellow whom he had hurt.

"I'm sorry, Billy; I won't do it again."

"That's all right, Buck; I ain't mad at you."

"You may take your seat!"

Buck slouched back beside Ike Flynn. The teacher looked at the latter and said:

"If you have anything to say, Isaac, I am ready for you."

"Oh, I hain't nothing ag'in you; I think you're the splendidest teacher that ever lived."

Dick could not repress a smile.

"And I hope you will be one of my splendidest pupils; we will now open the exercises."

And then amid the hush, and standing in his usual place behind his desk, the instructor closed his eyes and reverently repeated the Lord's prayer, all the boys, excepting one, joining in. Buck would come to it later.

Dick used admirable tact on that eventful day. He pitied the humiliation of the big

fellow and did what he could to lessen it. He avoided the natural mistake of giving too much attention to him. Buck had brought no books to school and the teacher supplied him from his limited store. The lad had little learning, but showed a desire for knowledge. Dick strove to be unusually genial with the school itself. The effect of the victory in the morning was to awe those who were disposed to be mischievous; they were more attentive and studious than usual. In the course of the day, their instructor related several entertaining incidents, which made all feel pleasant. Once a furtive glance at Buck showed a faint smile on his face. He had been amused by one of the stories of his conqueror.

The latter refrained from going out of doors at recess, as he would have done in other circumstances, to join in the sports of the lads. On his return from dinner, the teacher rather expected another snowball contest with Buck, though in a friendly spirit, but the youth took care to send no challenging missile in the direction of his instructor.

When school was dismissed in the afternoon, Buck kept his seat, observing which,

Ike Flynn did the same. Buck looked angrily at him.

"What are you waiting for?" he demanded.

"Thought I'd stay with you."

"I don't want you; clear out."

"All right," replied Ike, meekly rising and following the others.

Dick waited till the last one had gone, and the door was closed behind him. He knew that the Spirit was working in Buck.

The fellow had wheeled around on the bench, so as to sit with his back to the desk and the wall behind him. His face was red and he was now fighting hard with himself. The teacher looked kindly at him and still waited. Suddenly the youth looked up and said in a firm voice:

"Mr. Chandler, Billy Brown said he'd forgive me; will you do so?"

It was hard for the teacher to command himself, but in a slightly tremulous tone he replied:

"With all my heart, Buck; you and I are going to be the best of friends from now on."

CHAPTER XII

THE DEACON'S "SYMPATHY"

THAT winter was one of the severest in the history of America. A financial panic caused much suffering everywhere. Scores of the oldest mercantile houses toppled over like tenpins; great enterprises which gave work to thousands, stopped operations; and mills, factories, and workshops beyond listing, closed their doors. In the cities, the bread lines grew longer, and despite the activity of individual and public charity, men, women, and children perished of starvation. No known law governs panics and "hard times," which often come with the suddenness of the cyclone, and spread ruin, devastation, and death on every hand.

Ampere district could not wholly escape the blow. Perhaps, all things considered, the farmer is the most independent member of the community. He may be deprived of ready money and may have to economize rigidly in clothing and other necessities, but

his bread and butter are drawn from the ground under his feet, and rarely or never need he suffer for food.

In the region known as Bear Hollow, which was half a mile to the rear of the schoolhouse, dwelt eight families, most of them having numerous children, the fathers of whom earned their living on the railway. Their employment had been steady for years, but the relentless need of economy caused all to be "laid off," with the vague promise of employment again when the times should improve.

To these needy ones were added almost as many families scattered through the neighborhood. Two were widows, one with three and the other with four small children, most of the others were proud and suffered in silence. They would have to be much more needy before asking help of the poormaster of the county or allowing their pitiful plight to become known to their neighbors, who hesitated to offer charity through fear of giving offense.

Early in December, Doctor Hemingway gave notice from the pulpit that a meeting of the members and others would be held two nights later in the main body of the church

to consider and adopt means for aiding the impoverished who were at their doors.

"Providence permitting," he added, "I shall be here, ready to do all I can to assist in this work. If Christianity means anything, it means clothing the naked, warming the shivering, and feeding the hungry. We cannot understand the mystery of pain and suffering in the world, but there is no mystery as to what our duty is so long as they exist. I know of my own knowledge that at this moment there are scores of men, women, and children who are in actual need of food. This need will increase as the winter advances. We have no time to lose; I trust that every one of you will give this important matter prayerful consideration and come prepared to do your utmost."

Tuesday evening was clear and starlit. Enough snow lay on the ground to make sleighing pleasant, and those who did not prefer to walk came to the church by such conveyances. Doctor Hemingway and his daughter were among the early arrivals. They were driven by their colored coachman, all being warmly wrapped in furs and robes. Early as they came, many were ahead of them. The church was half-filled, and

other people steadily thronged through both front doors.

When the venerable clergyman rose to offer prayer hardly a seat was empty. He had seen nothing like it for years and his heart warmed at the sight. By virtue of his office he acted as chairman, and his daughter was named as secretary.

"It does me good to look into your faces," said the doctor, rising beside the little table in front of the pulpit; "your hearts are all in the right place, and I know from your expression that you are eager to go to work. Since Sunday my daughter and I have made further investigations and find the situation of many families worse than we had supposed. I shall not mention names nor cite instances, but I assure you that not a day nor an hour should be lost; time is too precious; some of the sufferers are so sensitive that they are bearing their hunger in silence; food is needed this very moment: many a house is cold and dismal, though in the open country the want of fuel is not so pressing as in the cities. Now, in order to save time, I suggest that a committee be named who shall take charge of the relief of the needy. This committee will be your

agent, but it must have assistance or it will be powerless. Our pleasant duty will be to furnish it the means—the sinews of war, as it may be termed. Several hundreds of dollars should be secured before we adjourn. I shall be glad to hear from any brother or sister."

The clergyman sat down. Usually at such times there is a lull, though many may be eager to proclaim their ideas. Hardly, however, had he resumed his chair, when Deacon Whitsett, from his pew near the front, rose to his feet and cleared his throat impressively.

Sitting to the left and several pews back, Asaph Jenkins felt a sudden pang of reproach. It was only a few weeks since his sharp interview with the rich country merchant, the result of which was the wringing of a ten-dollar library subscription from him, followed by a check for that amount.

"I was too hard on him," thought Asaph; "he's not so stingy an old fellow after all; he means to come down with a big subscription. If I hadn't arranged with Mr. Green to open an opposition store, I should feel inclined to hold off."

"I have been told he is close and hard-

fisted," mused Dick Chandler, "but his heart is all right. What does that mean?"

The teacher just then caught the eye of Squire Redwood in the pew with him, and what did the squire do but gravely wink at him?

As the deacon's tall stooping form straightened, he stepped into the aisle and stood under the swinging lamp over his head. He drew a paper from his coat-pocket and held it so that the reflection fell upon the writing. He adjusted his spectacles with the other hand, cleared his throat, and said in his thin voice:

"Mr. Cheerman, I beg to offer the following."

He glanced over the top of his glasses and peered at the doctor, who inclined his head: "We shall all be glad to hear from Brother Whitsett," whereupon the deacon, amid the profound hush, read:

"*Whereas,* There is much suffering in the country on account of hard times, and some of the aforesaid sufferers are in our midst; and

"*Whereas,* These sufferers have always shown themselves to be orderly and law-abiding citizens; and,

"*Whereas,* The history of our beloved country shows that hard times never last long, but are always succeeded by better times than before; therefore,

"*Resolved,* That we who are here assembled feel it our duty to urge upon those in our midst to be economical and careful in their manner of living, and to keep up hope, knowing that the clouds will soon roll by, and the sun will again shine in all its effulgence as aforesaid.

"*Resolved,* That all the poor in our midst have our sincere sympathy."

Having finished the reading, the deacon took off his glasses, walked forward, and laying the paper on the stand in front of Miss Hemingway, said:

"Mr. Cheerman, I move the adoption of them resolutions."

Dick Chandler rose, while Asaph Jenkins began writing on a pad with his pencil, smiling as he did so.

"I should like to ask Deacon Whitsett whether that is all he has to say."

The deacon had resumed his vigorous chewing of nothing. Returning to his place in the aisle opposite his own pew, he looked at the teacher.

"I don't exactly understand what you mean, Mr. Chandler."

"You have offered your sympathy to those who are in need of food; I wish to ask what you mean by sympathy."

The deacon's mirthless smile was intended to crush the presumptuous young man.

The two spoke directly to each other, thus violating parliamentary law by ignoring the chairman, but he did not object.

"You're a school teacher, and some folks think you know a good deal; if you don't understand the meaning of the word 'sympathy,' you'd better ask one of your little boys."

All unruffled, Dick retorted:

"Suppose one of the committee should walk into a house where the father, mother, and children were shivering in the cold and were gaunt with hunger, and he should say to the sufferers, 'I haven't any fuel or bread or clothing to give you, but Deacon Whitsett sends you from his store of groceries his "sympathy"'—I wish to ask how much good that would do them. Will they be less hungry, will their rags warm their bodies, or will they be benefited in any way?"

He looked inquiringly at the deacon, who

folded his arms, slid lower down in his pew, chewed harder than ever, and scornfully refused to reply.

At this juncture Asaph Jenkins came to his feet.

"Mr. Chairman, I have a resolution to offer."

He walked forward and handed a slip of paper to Miss Hemingway. She read it over to herself, and all saw her smile. Then she stood up and said in her clear voice:

"*Resolved,* That Deacon Allen Q. Whitsett give five sacks of his best Pillsbury flour to the poor of Ampere district, the same to be distributed by such committee as shall be appointed at this meeting."

This motion was clearly out of order, and Doctor Hemingway knew it, but the vein of humor and justice in his composition caused him to hold his peace and to look expectantly in the faces before him.

The angered deacon bounced to his feet.

"I won't do nothing of the kind; nobody can make me give away what belongs to myself."

"I am afraid," said the chairman gravely, "that I shall have to rule the motion out of order, Mr. Jenkins."

"I bow to the decision of the chair," replied the latter; "I had some doubts of its being parliamentary, when I submitted it. I wish to say, however, that Mr. Green, who will open a new grocery store next Monday at 'The Corners,' will make such a donation as I have named to the needy families of our neighborhood."

At this point, Mr. Green arose on the other side of the church.

"Mr. Chairman, regard for the truth will not permit me to remain silent. The contribution named by Mr. Jenkins was arranged for yesterday, but it is Mr. Jenkins who bears the expense. That is the understanding between him and me."

"Oh no, it isn't," promptly interposed Jenkins; "I shall claim the privilege of making the trifling gift which you had no business to mention, but you personally have got to hand me five sacks; if you don't, I shall add their cost to your rent."

Amid the general laugh the blushing Mr. Green said as he sat down:

"I shall be as glad as you to do that."

"And in recognition of your liberality I hope every family, without exception, will give you its custom. As my resolution is

ruled out, Mr. Chairman, I second those offered by Deacon Whitsett and trust all will vote as they feel."

"The secretary will read the resolutions again."

Dorothy Hemingway did so in as grave a voice as her father's.

"You have all heard the motion: those who are in favor will say, 'Aye.'"

The doctor paused. The hush was unbroken. Even the deacon chewed sourly and remained silent.

"Those who are opposed say, 'No.'"

The response was thunderous.

"The next thing in order perhaps will be the appointment of a committee of distribution among those who are in need of aid. Will you make the nominations or is it your pleasure that the chair shall appoint?"

"I suggest that the chair appoint," said Dick Chandler.

Here the fine hand of the teacher appeared. He had talked with the doctor, who wished to make him chairman, but Dick persuaded the clergyman that Asaph Jenkins, because of his acquaintance throughout the district, the leisure at his command, and his generous disposition, was the one

above all others to serve in that position. At the same time Dick promised what aid he could give.

The second member of the committee was Buck Smith. He was sitting at the rear of the church, never dreaming of anything of the kind, but grinning over the way in which, as he expressed it, the folks were "soaking" the deacon. He almost fell off his seat, and his face turned crimson. He would have declined, but didn't know how to do it. While he was meditating whether he should snatch up his cap, dash out of the door, and not stop running until the Ampere district was miles behind, the chairman named his daughter as the third member. Every one felt the appropriateness of this, and the whole committee were confirmed without a dissenting voice.

"It's all right, Buck," assured the teacher, grasping the hand of the big fellow after adjournment; "you will get as much good out of it as in playing ball. Help us in this, and you can count on me when we begin practice next spring."

CHAPTER XIII

BUCK SMITH

INASMUCH as nearly all the leading families were represented at this notable gathering in Ampere church, the leaders of the movement were wise in striking while the iron was hot. Miss Hemingway had a large subscription paper ready, which she and her father had already signed. They were followed by most of the others, who crowded forward. Asaph Jenkins was on the watch for two members, Deacon Whitsett and Landlord Jorson. He was prepared to say something sharp to them if they gave the chance, but the deacon, instead of going to the front with the others, walked outdoors, glum and sour, without saying a word to any one. Jorson hesitated a few minutes, but must have had a fear of what awaited him, for he slunk after the deacon into the outer darkness.

Asaph Jenkins asked Miss Hemingway and Buck Smith to meet him in one corner

of the church, that they might lay out their plan of work. Buck was grinning and blushing, having overcome the panic into which he was first thrown. He made up his mind not to resign until he learned the nature of the work awaiting him. It should be said that Buck or Buchanan, to give his full name, was an orphan who lived with Mr. Curtis, a prosperous farmer whose boy Warren was one of the pupils in the public school. Mr. Curtis was rather slow-witted, but meant well. He never interfered with Buck's conduct. When he heard of the youth throwing a teacher out of school, he merely remarked, "Boys will be boys," and let it go at that.

As the youth walked toward the corner of the room, Miss Hemingway gave him her hand.

"I am glad, Buck, you are going to help us," she smiled; "there isn't any one in church I'd rather have as a right-hand man than you."

"How about me?" demanded Jenkins, who overheard the remark, as the speaker intended he should.

"I shouldn't give Buck for half a dozen of you."

"Well, that's what I call rubbing it in; what do you think, Buck?"

The big fellow grinned more expansively than ever.

"I don't believe I'll amount to anything, but I'll do my best."

"Nobody can do more than that. Well, let's get down to business, for I don't suppose Doctor Hemingway will want to wait long."

The method agreed upon could not have been simpler. The neighborhood was apportioned into three districts or sections, each of the committee taking one under his or her care. Miss Hemingway, by her own request, was assigned to Bear Hollow. Jenkins did not ask the reason, but he suspected it. She had already visited it so often on her sweet ministrations that she knew every one, including all the children. They would feel freer in making known their wants to her than to a comparative stranger. This left eight families that it was believed were in need. Jenkins asked Buck to name the four he preferred to call upon. Buck said he had no choice, whereupon he was assigned to that number, all within convenient distance of one another.

It began to look as if Jenkins knew beforehand the shape that matters would take that evening at the church meeting, for he drew from his pocket a package of printed forms and handed a score to Miss Hemingway and the same number to Buck, while he retained the remainder.

"Where you find any one who wants flour, sugar, bread, or anything in the way of food, write the name in this form, with whatever you wish him or her to have, and with that of Deacon Whitsett above, sign your name. All the applicant has to do is to take the paper to the deacon's store and the order will be honored."

"When did you say Mr. Green will be ready for business?" asked Dorothy.

"He expects to open next Monday; some of his goods have arrived."

"I tell you what will be better than that," said Buck, who was rapidly plucking up courage.

"What is that?"

"When we find any one starving to death, why, just tell him to hold on and stand it a few days longer, and then go to the new store and eat enough to make up for lost time."

Neither Jenkins nor Dorothy smiled. The former said:

"It might be, Buck, that the poor children couldn't stand it any longer; you remember Doctor Hemingway said we hadn't an hour to spare."

"I forgot that, but I'm down on that old fraud of a deacon."

"You don't despise him any more than I do; we shall use him, but switch off to Mr. Green as soon as he is ready for us. Excuse me a moment."

Jenkins hurried across to where the subscribers had laid their contributions on the table. They footed up more than two hundred dollars, with considerable remaining in pledge. He caught up the bills and rejoined his friends.

"Here, Buck, is fifty dollars; keep it with you until you have a chance to distribute it among the poor; Miss Hemingway will do the same, and I'll hold on to the balance; don't be too free with the funds at first, yet don't slight any one. One good thing is that many of those who have money instead of orders are likely to walk over to Ridgewood and spend it there instead of going to Deacon Whitsett's store."

"I sha'n't forget to tell 'em to do that," commented Buck.

When the meeting had adjourned, and the people were going homeward, Buck lingered until he was alone near the corner of the wall which bounded the graveyard of the church.

"Doctor Hemingway said there wasn't an hour to lose, so what's the use of my waiting till to-morrow? Widow Shefflein is the nearest; her home can't be much more than a mile off; it's early, and I'll head for her place."

Buttoning his coat to his chin, and pulling his fur cap over his ears, Buck thrust his hands into his side-pockets and struck a pace which quickly carried him to his destination.

A light twinkled from the window, and knocking at the door, he was bidden to enter. The thin, pale-faced woman had just put her children to bed, and was sewing by the light of a tallow candle in front of the scant wood fire on the hearth. She showed her astonishment at the visit, but, knowing Buck, gave him welcome. He proceeded to business at once.

"Mrs. Shefflein, there has been a meeting down at the church to-night and a big lot of

money was raised: how much of it do you want?"

The surprised woman silently looked at him.

"You don't catch on; I should have said we've found out that there's a few families in Ampere district that are in need of clothes and food; I've an idee you're one of 'em; if you are, say so, or never speak ag'in about it."

"It grieves me very much, Buck——"

"I don't see why you should grieve; that hain't got anything to do with it."

"I should never confess it if it were not for my little ones; they are hungry."

"How about yourself? Couldn't you manage to surround a big lot of victuals if you had a chance? Out with it; for I've got to call at three other places before I go to bed."

Thus pressed, the widow, whose eyes filled with tears, admitted her need.

Buck drew the wad of bills from his pocket.

"How much will do you till next Monday?"

"If I had one or two dollars it would make us all comfortable."

"Get out! Here's five dollars; but," added

the youth sternly, "it's give to you on one condition; you must go over to Ridgewood to spend it."

"Why, Buck, it's four miles to that town."

"That don't make any difference; I'll send round our sleigh to-morrow morning and you and Mrs. Jennings, where I'm going to call next, can drive over together."

"Oh, Buck, how kind you are!" she said in a broken voice.

"None of that; I didn't do it; it's the other folks; I'll see you ag'in in a few days: good-night."

He hurried to the next widow's home. She, too, was sitting alone in her humble living-room, and was startled when she heard the heavy step, followed by the resounding knock. Nor was she much relieved at sight of the caller. She knew all about Buck, the bully of the neighborhood, who had long been the terror of adults as well as of children.

When Mrs. Jennings grasped the meaning of the visit and the five dollars was placed in her thin hand, she impulsively threw her arms about the big fellow's neck, and, with tears in her eyes, kissed him on the cheek.

"Don't do that," he protested, disengaging the arms none too gently, and stooping to

pick up his cap that had fallen to the floor; "this ain't my money; it was give by the folks at church to-night. I must hurry!"

"Heaven bless them and you, Buck; now my children and I will have plenty of food: yes, I'll take the ride to Ridgewood with Mrs. Shefflein to-morrow as soon as you send the sleigh; I'll never forget the kind people and you in my prayers."

"Much obleeged—I need 'em. Good-night."

The hour was late, and it was a half-mile to the next home. When the messenger of hope and good cheer reached it the man and wife were preparing to retire. Mr. Hains was one of the toilers on the railway and was idle against his will. The stress of his condition was shown by the fact that he had not enough tobacco even to smoke. He was a man of few words, but there could be no mistaking his heartfelt gratitude. Under the plea of haste and the lateness of the hour, Buck did not take the time to sit down.

"There's no telling when one of 'em might break out," was the shuddering thought of the young man; "if they do, I want to be somewhere else—and yet," he added with a grin, as he strode away in the darkness,

" there's something about this business that makes a fellow feel all right."

Pat O'Brien lived in the last house. No light twinkled from any of the windows. Pat was a merry-hearted Irishman, and also a railway employe. He had been figuring that evening that he had enough tobacco to last him three days longer, if he used strict economy. His love for his wife and five little ones would not permit him to spend a penny in self-indulgence so long as they were in need. When he and his wife went to their room he spoke in his cheerful voice, but his heart was heavy. He was wondering how much longer he would have to wait before asking the poormaster for relief. With his growing family, his scant wages would not allow him to lay by a penny against the rainy day that was sure to come sooner or later.

Buck had to pound on the door with his fist several times before an upper window was raised, and the bushy head of Pat was thrust out.

" Who is it that's distoorbing dacent folks in the middle of the night? " he asked.

" It's me, Buck Smith; I want to see you partic'lar, Pat."

"Arrah, now, yees hev coom to borrow a thousan' dollars from me; I knows yer ways, Buck. Sorry I can't accommodate you; wait till the bank opens to-morrer."

"Come down right off and let me in; if you don't I'll break in the door, and then you'll be sorry."

"It's likely I'll be sorry if I admit yees, but I'll take chances, for it's me curiosity that makes me want to know what yer business can be, as me little Mike said whin he examined the stinger of a bumble-bee, and dropped the same with a yell."

The window was lowered, a candle was lighted on the lower floor, and Pat in his stocking feet drew back the bolt and admitted his caller.

"I can't stay, Pat; the folks at the church raised a pile of money to-night and have sent me round to divide some of it among them as can make better use of it than they can. Here's ten dollars for you; one condition is that you must go to Ridgewood and spend it; buy a farm if you want to, but don't keep me longer; I'm getting sleepy—Good-night!"

Pat followed him to the door, and standing in the light of the candle, called:

"Coom back in half an hour and wake me, Buck; I'm draaming now."

It was well toward eleven o'clock when Buck, with his long, vigorous stride, approached "The Corners." As he came opposite the tavern the door opened and a man staggered out. He could walk quite well, and turning to the left, headed toward Bear Hollow. Buck recognized him.

"Owen Palmer drunk again; fact, he's drunk all the time. I wonder why the school-teacher don't get after him."

Buck did not speak to the miserable fellow, who passed within a few paces of him, but, stepping upon the porch of the tavern, pushed open the door and confronted the landlord, who was talking with two or three customers, and about to close for the night.

"Hello, Lott Jorson," called Buck, standing just over the threshold; "the folks raised a heap of money for the poor to-night in Ampere district; you didn't give anything."

"Didn't have a chance," said the other sullenly.

"Do you want me to tell you how you can give as much as them all together and without paying a cent?"

The landlord stared, and distrustfully asked:

"What are you driving at?"

"Stop selling whisky to poor wretches like Owen Palmer that has just staggered out of your place. It will be worth a million dollars to Ampere, and besides you can feel that you ain't the worst hypocrite and meanest scoundrel in the whole state. Chew that over. Good-night!"

Mr. Curtis never questioned the comings and goings of Buck Smith. He and his wife had long been asleep when the big fellow unlocked the door of the sitting-room, lighted the candle that was awaiting him, and climbed to his room in the third story. There, after placing the light on the small stand, he dropped into a chair, crossed his beam-like legs, folded his arms, and sighed.

"I wonder what's the matter with me," he mused; "I never felt so queer in my life; can't be that the good things I've done to-night *have struck in!*"

He grinned over his own whim.

"Last winter when I pitched the teacher out of the winder and piled the snow over him, I felt mighty good; though I reckon

he didn't feel much that way. It must have been six months later that I had my big fight with Jersey Bill, the darkey; it was the hardest battle I ever fought, and once I thought he had me going, but I won out, and as the boys cheered me and shook my hand and give me the stakes, which the same was ten dollars, wasn't I proud and didn't I feel chesty? Wal, I reckon!"

He sat a few minutes recalling that stirring incident from which he had emerged triumphant. Then the homely face became grave.

"But that was different. There was an odd feeling that come to me when that first widder begun crying; I had to keep swallering, and as the next one give me a smack before I knowed what she was up to, you could have knocked me over with a toothpick. It was the same at the other places, though they had different ways of showing it. It's when I think of them calls to-night that the queer feeling comes over me.

"Mr. Chandler said the other day that when you done another feller a kindness you felt better than he did. Now them four families are mighty happy and it's all I can do this minute to keep from yelling,

and dancing a double shuffle on the floor; I'd do it, too, if it wouldn't scare the folks downstairs half to death. Yes; it's 'cause I've been doin' good to-night that I'm happier than I ever was before. There's something in what the teacher said."

Buck was generally a sound sleeper, for he was blessed with rugged health, but never did he sleep more sweetly than on that night, when, as he sank into unconsciousness, the memory of his last blessed experience hovered above his pillow.

CHAPTER XIV

NOW!

DOCTOR HEMINGWAY and Dick Chandler agreed that the meeting held in the church to raise funds for the poor was the beginning of the most remarkable revival ever known in that district or neighborhood. The veteran clergyman knew the signs when he saw them, and no one could have been more alert than he. His own weakening physical powers would have held him back but for his reliance upon Dick. His assistant seemed to grow in strength spiritually, bodily, and mentally.

On the Saturday night following the distribution of aid among the poor, a conference was held in the library of the parsonage. Those who took part were the doctor, his daughter, and Dick Chandler.

"They are ready," said the old gentleman, with beaming face. "The Spirit is infusing them; they have fallen asleep under my waning administration, but are awaking.

Three days ago two of our leading male members, and the same number of women, asked me to arrange for a series of revival meetings; yesterday they renewed their request, and two others joined them; to-day I had five similar appeals from other members of the church who are eager to help in the work."

"What a blessed state of things!" exclaimed Dick. "God would not forgive us if we failed in our duty."

"I have met the same feeling among those I visited," added Dorothy; "in truth, the revival has already begun; it seems to me we can only assist and help direct."

"I may say that I have noticed a more thoughtful disposition among my pupils; it puzzled me at first, but there is no mistaking it."

"You are to preach to-morrow, Richard; suppose you announce that, beginning on Monday night, we shall hold a series of prayer-meetings through the week, omitting possibly Saturday evening?"

"Why not begin to-morrow night, papa?" Dorothy asked gently.

The parent rested his hand fondly on her head and replied:

"There is no reason why we should not; I shall not spare myself; but, Richard, you are younger than I and must take the main work upon your shoulders."

"'Here am I; send me, O, Lord,'" was his prompt response.

"Will you permit me to suggest a text for to-morrow morning?" asked the venerable man.

"I shall thank you very much if you will do so."

"It is this: 'Now is the accepted time.'"

Dick sat bolt upright.

"Those are the very words that have been haunting me for the past few days; I had decided to use them as the basis of my appeal."

"It is another indication of the work of the Spirit," said the Doctor reverently: "you need no suggestion as to your line of thought: the text is so direct that you cannot wander from it."

Dick had preached a number of times, but never had he made so fervent and convincing a plea as on that wintry morning when he stood in the Ampere pulpit and spoke to a congregation which filled nearly every seat.

"What do the inspired words, 'Now is the accepted time' mean?" he asked. "Do they mean next year, next month, next week, or to-morrow? None of these; they mean what they say—*now*. And why *now?* Because it is the only time that is yours. I have been in this district a little more than two months, but in that brief period four new graves have been dug in your churchyard and four of your members have been laid in their last resting-place. At that rate a score or more will be summoned to the bar of God within the coming year. Will it be I? Will it be you? That call which comes like a thief in the night may sound in your ears before the rising of to-morrow's sun. It may be deferred; I pray that it will, but the order will ring out sooner or later to every one within reach of my voice.

"Can there be a more favorable time for turning to God? Will it be when the years have bowed your head and your strength is departing from you, when you are racked with pain and suffering? You do not deny that you owe obedience to your Saviour. Is it fair to put off that submission until you are unable to give Him service?"

At the conclusion of his appeal, which he saw had produced a deep impression, he announced that, beginning that evening, a prayer and inquiry meeting would be held in the main body of the church, to which he invited every one to be present and to bring as many others as possible.

"Mr. Jenkins, Miss Hemingway, and the choir will take charge of the singing; we have the promise of the help of our leading members, and Doctor Hemingway and I will give all the aid in our power."

Jenkins had assumed the leadership of the choir, and Dorothy played the organ. Dick had not asked them or any other singer for their services, for he knew it was not necessary.

The hardest one to rouse, or to make sensible of his own unworthiness, is the man, most likely an official of the church, who during his long membership has dried up. Serene and unshakable in his conviction of his own goodness, stern, strict, and uncharitable toward the failings of others, he looks upon the rest of the brethren and sisters as unable to probe the depths of his piety or to approach his sanctity.

"For seven years," said one of these fos-

sils, as he solemnly rose in prayer-meeting, "I have not done a wrong thing, spoken a wrong word, or had a wrong thought."

"For how long?" inquired the pastor.

"Seven years," was the unctuous response.

"Then, my dear brother, you have been overdue in heaven for seven years."

Deacon Whitsett rarely or never absented himself from the mid-week prayer-meeting. Even when the attendance dwindled to less than a dozen, he was among the first arrivals. None sang more heartily than he, in his nasal voice, and none prayed with more fervency. His petitions never varied more than by an occasional word or two. Squire Redwood used to repeat the prayer sometimes to his wife. Now and then the deacon forgot himself, or "lost his place," so to speak, but he never hesitated. He straightway began again, and went through without halt. Nor did he forget to pray that all might be "diligent in business," and invariably he referred to himself and acquaintances as "filthy rags" in the sight of their Creator. The deacon would have felt slighted had he not been called upon to lead in prayer at any assemblage where it was offered.

Dick Chandler and Doctor Hemingway were profoundly moved on the following Sunday night, when the church was filled as never before. Deacon Whitsett, all oblivious of the sharp rebukes he had received, was among the first to appear, and with his meek wife occupied his seat well up to the front, ready to respond when asked. Dick, who led the meeting, did not invite him to pray. While he had no resentment toward the man, he felt he was out of tune with the spirit that hovered over and pervaded the assemblage like a benison from Heaven. There were other good, humble men, not forgetting several gifted sisters, who spoke from the heart.

Asaph Jenkins and Dorothy Hemingway led in the singing of several hymns, all of which were familiar to the people. They joined with fervor, even if a few were off the key, and lagged in a way that would have disturbed the nerves of any leader except Jenkins. This young man with his marvelous voice was as active in good works as the most ardent of the church members, but when appealed to by Dick, laughingly shook his head.

"Not yet, old fellow; I don't see any

more light than I did months ago. I'll help you in my way, but leave me out of the reckoning, when making up your list of penitents to be saved."

Doctor Hemingway never prayed with more moving power than at the opening of the first of the revival meetings. The old clergyman was profoundly affected. Something told him that this was the last work of the kind in which he would ever take part, and he meant with God's favor that it should be the best he had ever done.

The prayer finished, Dick, in a voice tremulous with feeling, stood up and made his appeal. He spoke in a low conversational, but impressive voice. By-and-by, he heard a sob, and then others. The emotion was not boisterous, but intense.

"I shall ask all who are under conviction of sin, who are resolved to turn to God, and who wish our prayers in their behalf, to stand up."

He looked over the congregation. No one seemed to stir or hardly to breathe. It was at this moment that Asaph Jenkins stood beside Dick and, facing the people, began singing in a low voice, that was as the pleading of an angel:

"'Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.'"

The wonderful songster was on the second line when a young man sprang to his feet in the rear of the room.

"Thank God!" was the exclamation of Dick, who recognized the youth as Buck Smith; "there's another, and another, and still more!"

They were rising in all parts of the room, and it was noteworthy that a third of the penitents were church members—many having been such for years. None felt the need of repentance more than they.

Dick had the admirable gift of tact. Many a man in his situation would have called out the name of Buck Smith, or perhaps hastened down the aisle and flung an arm about his neck. Time and again a well-meaning person has repelled a penitent by such a blunder. While Dick's heart glowed, he treated Buck precisely like the others. The warm hand-clasp and the words of encouragement he saved until no other eye could see or ear hear them.

When more than twenty had risen, Jenkins began to sing the second stanza of that persuasive hymn. Before he could complete the line his voice abruptly stopped. The watchful Dorothy Hemingway saw what the trouble was, and instantly took up and went on with the hymn in a voice scarcely less sweet than that which had suddenly become mute.

"'Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, O leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.'"

Asaph Jenkins flung up his arms, and dropping on his knees called out in agony, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!'"

CHAPTER XV

GREAT RESULTS

AND then the Spirit took possession of all hearts. As much alone as in the midst of the wilderness or desert, Jenkins remained on his knees, with hands uplifted, with eyes streaming and his whole nature centered in that one plea for forgiveness and mercy.

Ejaculations of praise sounded from every part of the room. Even dignified old Doctor Hemingway struck the palms of his hands together and added an exclamation of thanksgiving to the general chorus. "I'm a shouting Methodist to-night!" he called out to all who could hear; "no wonder they make the arches ring!"

Hardly a man or woman could resist the wave of emotion. Some of those who were standing joined in the thanks, while others sat down, bewildered by the strange scene. Dick started a hymn, and then was unable to go on. Dorothy seized the words and carried them through, others joining in as

best they could. Rather curiously, she was the only one who remained self-possessed. With her intensely devout nature, she was suffused with the heavenly joy which throbbed in nearly every heart. But, somehow or other, she managed to remain mistress of herself all through the remarkable scene. Strange that in this respect she was stronger than her father or sturdy Dick Chandler.

Amid the excitement and stress of emotion, Jenkins abruptly rose from his knees, stood upright, with radiant countenance, and while his cheeks were wet with tears of joy, raised one hand for silence. It was some time before the listeners could subdue themselves.

"My friends," he said, while all gave attention to his words; "those who have known me for the past years know that I have been a scoffer at religion; possibly not a scoffer, but an unbeliever. I should have been glad to believe but something held me back. I have listened to the most persuasive sermons of Doctor Hemingway and Mr. Chandler; I have helped to sing and have even taught a Sunday-school class, but all the time my heart was untouched.

"To-night God called in my ears, 'You are a sinner; if you don't repent, you will be lost forever!'

"It struck me like a thunderbolt. You saw me drop as if I were shot; I could not help it; He would have served me right had He struck me dead where I stood, but, instead of doing that, He has pardoned my sins; I am reconciled to Him; from this time forward I shall be a Christian.

"I tell you, religion is no cunningly devised fable. It is real: let us all yield to-night, and not sin away the day of grace. Come, brother, come, sister, boys, girls,—every one!"

The response to this burning appeal was amazing. Two-thirds of those present sprang to their feet.

"I've been a church member for fifteen years," confessed Hugh Longstreet in a loud voice; "I haven't missed a dozen church services in all that time; I have given of my means as I could afford, and some of you have met me at the prayer-meetings, but for a long, long time religion has been dead within me; I need a good sound conversion; I must be made over again or I'm lost."

And overcome with emotion, the sunburned farmer dropped into his seat, pressed his handkerchief to his face, and sobbed unrestrainedly.

The fountains of the deep were broken up. The scene which followed was beyond description. For a half-hour there were no leaders, for all were swept away by the overwhelming tide. Singing, prayers, and joyful shouts shook the old church as never before. Even Dick Chandler abandoned the attempt to control or direct the outburst.

Doctor Hemingway was the first to pull himself together. Standing up, he raised one hand as a call for silence. Several minutes passed before his tremulous voice could make itself heard.

"My dear brothers and sisters, you have learned from your own experience to-night what the day of Pentecost meant; let us calm ourselves and go to our homes; between now and to-morrow night spend all the time you can in meditation and prayer; God never turns away from the cry of the penitent; come again to-morrow night prepared for another baptism, for it will not be denied us."

After he pronounced the benediction the

people, amid tears, sobbings, smiles, and fervent handshakings, slowly fell apart and wended their way homeward.

The second night of the revival was in many respects like the first, with the difference that the participants were in better control. Dick Chandler and Doctor Hemingway had talked together, and agreed upon their policy. In the meantime the teacher said a few encouraging words to Buck Smith and others. He knew there was no mistake about their conversion, and the advice he gave them was invaluable.

It has been said that the Spirit which fired the assemblage at church and diffused itself throughout the neighborhood was manifest in the day school. Had the teacher followed his impulse, he would have suspended all study and turned the session into a prayer-meeting; but, since the school was a public one, he felt he had no right to do this. He spoke a few words before dismissal, and urged all the boys and girls, whose parents would permit, to be at the church that evening. Most of them were present.

It is strange how close a smile is to a tear, and how often the most solemn occa-

sion is lightened by a touch of comedy. Ike Flynn was not at church on Sunday evening, but was among the first arrivals the next night. He came at the heels of Buck Smith, who walked halfway up the middle aisle, and then motioned his companion to enter the pew. Ike meekly obeyed and Buck sat down next to him.

When the invitation to rise was given for those who wished to start anew in the right path, Buck looked significantly at Ike. The latter fidgeted and kept his seat. Then Buck reached over with his big hand, gripped him by his coat collar, and jerked him to his feet.

"Why didn't you rise up before!" he demanded, in a husky whisper.

"I meant to," stammered Ike; "I was waiting to get a good start."

"Well, didn't I give it to you?"

When the services had proceeded for half an hour Doctor Hemingway said:

"Every heart must be overflowing with thankfulness, for it is Pentecost again; let us now kneel down; whoever feels like leading in prayer will do so without waiting to be called upon; time is precious; do not waste the minutes."

While the congregation were sinking to their knees Deacon Whitsett's thin, penetrating voice was heard. He started out as he always did, but when halfway through with his stereotyped petition he must have felt that some recognition was due the amazing situation that had arisen. He stumbled through a few broken sentences, and then attempted to flounder back on the track, but he was hopelessly derailed and starting at the beginning again, he went straight through without a break. No one smiled, for the solemnity of the occasion shut out all feelings of levity.

Squire Redwood, after a slight pause, followed with a touching prayer, which stirred every heart. He was gifted with a natural eloquence, and few were more impressive than he at that memorable spiritual awakening. The response to the prayer was the coming of several to Christ.

The revival services in the Ampere church were held for three weeks on every night excepting Saturday. It was prudent that a little time should be taken for rest. After the period named the people came together on alternate nights. This continued for three more weeks, when the evening services

were restricted to Sundays and the regular prayer-meeting on Wednesday nights.

Again Doctor Hemingway was wise. What he feared was the reaction which often follows revivals of religion. When the wave rises to a great height, the watery valleys become deeper: exaltation often gives way to depression. He decreased the number of meetings while the appetite was strong with the people.

"It is better that they should remain a little hungry than to become sated," he said to Dick. "They have had their time of feasting and renewal of strength; now let them get to work in the Master's vineyard."

During those strenuous nights neither the doctor nor Dick received or asked for any outside aid.

"I am sure I could get Mr. Moody," said the young man, "and several other evangelists, but they have their hands full elsewhere, and so long as we do not need help, we shall not call them from other fields."

"My sentiments are similar," assented the venerable clergyman; "my youth seems to be renewed like the eagle's and yours needs no renewal, for it is with you. Then, too,

we have a singer in Mr. Jenkins who has no superior anywhere."

"And since his conversion he has thrown his whole soul into the work; he told me yesterday that every one in his Sunday-school class—and they number seventeen—will make a profession of faith and join the church on next communion day."

"No one can estimate the good he has done and is still doing. We must now, with the help of God, hold the people fast; there will be some lukewarmness later, but no heart should be allowed to grow cold or indifferent. Above all," added the clergyman, "the people must realize that religion is much more than a profession; any one can call himself a Christian, but he must learn to conquer his own evil nature and to help those around him to conquer theirs."

"I received a hint to-day from one of my pupils. Young Billy Brown is the wag of the school; he bubbles over with fun; he knows I can't help laughing at some of his antics; there's nothing vicious about him, but he is overcharged with mischief. He missed one of his lessons and I detained him after the others had gone. When he was through his recitation I asked him how he would

like to become a Christian. The bright little fellow told me he had thought much about it, but was afraid he never could be one. I asked him to tell me why not.

"'I'll have to look glum and cross, never laugh, and have no fun at all,' he said, with one of his grimaces. I assured him that he was wrong; he could have just as much fun and be a Christian as he could without trying to please God.

"'Is that so?' asked the little fellow, looking up wonderingly in my face. 'Can I play ball, and tag, and I spy, and all sorts of games?'

"'Most certainly,' I replied. 'God wouldn't have given you the inclination to laugh and play if He didn't mean you should have the chance.'

"'How about pinching, and sticking pins into the other fellers?' he asked slyly.

"'You must draw the line,' I impressed upon him; 'of course you know it is wrong to tell a falsehood, disobey your parents, or teacher, or do anything that will hurt the feelings of others. That is, you must live by the Golden Rule, of doing to others exactly what you would like to have them do to you.'

"'Well, I thought I couldn't have any more good times,' said Billy, and what he said set me to thinking. I have decided to set forth next Sunday from the pulpit as best I can, the joy of work and the sunshine of religion: what do you think of it?"

"You couldn't select two nobler themes; I may say without flattery that it will be a case in which your own example will add to the effect of your discourse."

"Far less than your own, doctor," said Dick warmly.

This was the basis of the young preacher's sermon the following Sunday, a sermon which showed plainly how the love of God, when it enters the heart, does change the current of its loves and desires so that many things which were enjoyed before lose their power to give pleasure, but that all wholesome amusement, all that does not leave a bad taste in the mouth, all that can be enjoyed with Christ present as a friend to share it, is the Christian's privilege and delight.

CHAPTER XVI

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

AT the next communion of the Ampere church one hundred and twenty-three members joined on profession of faith. The occasion could not have been more impressively solemn. No sermon was preached, but the venerable Doctor Hemingway spoke so feelingly that nearly all were melted to tears. Moreover, it was expected that more than a score would be added to the roll a month later. Most of these were children, whose parents preferred that they should receive further instruction and show that they fully understood the momentous importance of the step they were to take. Among those who left no doubt of their sincerity and of the soundness of their conversion, were Buck Smith, Ike Flynn, five other boys and six girls, all pupils in the public school.

A few nights later Dick sat in the library of Asaph Jenkins. The two had become

intimate and often visited each other. They were college graduates, brilliant intellectually, and real Christians. Their mutual attraction was strong, and few themes were discussed in which the mental attrition did not help each.

"The situation has become peculiar," said Jenkins; "if we were in the city, we should have to provide reading rooms and other amusements to keep the young men out of the saloons, but, fortunately, there are no saloons in Ampere."

"Always excepting Brother Jorson's 'Traveler's Rest,'" replied Dick.

"Don't you think we have had more than enough of him?"

"How can we close his place? He has a license and the law makes his horrible profession legal."

"I have found that his license will expire in the spring; the legislature is in session with a good prospect of passing the local option bill; I intend to go down to the capital and work day and night for it; our representative has given me his promise to support the measure, though the brewers are making a dead set at him."

"Heaven grant you may succeed!"

"But what I'm getting at, Dick, is this: don't you think Ampere church has been disgraced long enough by carrying the name of Lott M. Jorson as one of its members in good standing?"

"Not long enough, but too long; I have already formulated charges which I shall submit in due form. I should have done so before, but thought best to await the conclusion of the revival services."

"Have you ever talked with him?"

"I have done so twice; I thought it right to argue with him first and try to convince him, if possible, of the harm he is doing the community. If the local option bill becomes a law, we can vote his tavern out of existence."

"I fear it will fail; there's too much capital working against it. But what was the result of your talks with Brother Jorson?"

"Nothing; he claims, to use his favorite expression, that by discriminating in his customers and selling the best of liquor, he is 'uplifting the community.' What's the use of trifling with such hypocrites? When the surgeon finds it necessary to use the knife he does not hesitate."

"How do you explain his remaining in the church so long?"

"It was due to the dead-and-alive condition of the people. Squire Redwood once spoke to Doctor Hemingway of the scandal, and the good squire had appealed privately to Jorson; but the doctor felt more timid then than he does now, and thought it best to wait and see whether Jorson wouldn't awaken to the error of his ways."

"Well, Dick, since your course in that respect has been decided upon and the revival services are closed, and we don't need any halls of amusement to hold the young men and boys to the faith, are you going to let things slide?"

"By no means; I have already taken steps to organize a debating society, which will meet once each week; then you will start a singing school: are you ready?"

"Oh, I'm ready to climb a tree and sit and grin among the limbs if you think it will help in any way," replied Jenkins with his one-sided smile. "Counting the prayer-meeting, that will give us three nights each week, which I judge are enough."

"They will be, if handled right. I haven't told you, Jenkins, that Doctor Hem-

ingway and I feel that your help with your marvelous voice has been——"

"Being as you never have told me," interrupted the other, "suppose you don't try just now; wait, if you please, till I ask you. I have frittered away so much of my life that I am anxious to make up, so far as I can, for lost time. I'll sail right in on the singing school; we have some good voices in the neighborhood and I shall utilize them. But, Dick, we both agree that every Christian ought to consecrate his talents to God. Why don't you turn evangelist with me as your singer? We might not equal Moody and Sankey, but we ought to form a pretty good team."

"Not Sankey, nor any other singer, is your equal. Moody has a personality, a magnetism, a divine power that could never be mine. I should enjoy the work, Asaph, but I am still journeying toward Damascus."

"What do you mean?"

"When Saul of Tarsus set out for that ancient city to persecute the followers of the lowly Nazarene, he saw a great light while on the way. From that blinding radiance came a Voice which directed him what to do. Asaph, until that Voice speaks to me I

shall remain right here and do the work my hands find to do."

"Suppose it tells you to stay here?"

"Then here I stay; the past few months have shown me I did the right thing when I declined all pulpit offers and contracted to teach school for one year; I have had glimmerings of light, but the Voice has not yet spoken."

"You do right to wait for it, Dick. There won't be anything of the kind for me. At least, I don't look for it, for I was never meant for a parson; but as long as I know how to use my talent, as you call it, it is at the service of Him who has done everything for me."

Dick, who had been slowly pacing to and fro, sat down at the table opposite his friend.

"Jenkins, Ampere to-day illustrates what religion will do if it is given half a chance. The whole district is permeated with the spirit of the Saviour. Most of the impoverished men whom we are helping will soon go back to work on the railway; those who still need aid will get it in full from those who delight to give; you hear of no wrangling or disputes among the people. Squire Redwood says he has known of

nothing of the kind for months; scandal and gossiping seem to have ceased."

"Sort of a new Paradise," observed the pleased Jenkins.

"Not wholly so, for that will never be found in this world, but let me give you a pathetic proof of the spirit which reigns among my boys and girls. You know that Owen Palmer is the neighborhood drunkard; he is a sot who will not work, but is supported by his wife, who does washing and receives charity from others. She is a sweet, patient, resigned, hopeless woman, who I have been told was considered, not so long ago, the most beautiful and winsome girl in the community."

"You're right," said Jenkins with a nod; "I did my best to win her for a wife, but she turned me down and took Palmer; I couldn't blame her at the time, for he was ten times handsomer than I, which isn't saying much."

"The couple have a little girl, Molly, eight years old, who has been coming to school, even in the depth of winter. She is pale, thoughtful, and poorly dressed, though of late she has been more warmly clothed, and wears strong shoes."

"That's due to Miss Hemingway, who has long paid particular attention to that miserable family."

"Every boy and girl knows Molly's affliction; her father is a drunkard; among so many pupils as mine, you would expect to find more than one thoughtless or cruel enough to taunt her with her disgrace. But nothing of the kind has ever taken place, for I have watched closely. More than that, she is a favorite with all. The girls press cake, pieces of pie, and delicacies upon her; the boys give her rides on their sleds; and I believe she is the only girl in school at whom Billy Brown hasn't made one of his horrible faces.

"Now this kindness, this tender regard for the little pale afflicted one, is explained by their trying to do as Jesus would do in their places."

"It is wonderful," was the thoughtful comment of Jenkins, "but what of little Molly herself?"

"That is the saddest part of it," replied Dick with a sigh; "she is weak, and anæmic, and is wasting away. I believe she is in a decline and dying of a broken heart."

"A few weeks ago I should have asked,

'Why does God permit such a thing?' But I feel now that there is some good though unfathomable reason for it. Dick, can't something be done to save that sodden brute? Not that he deserves it, but for the sake of Molly the mother and Molly the child? Have you tried to reach him?"

"Yes, but probably not in the right way. I have stopped him twice on the highway and appealed to and scored him. But what's the use of protesting to a man when he is intoxicated?"

"The difficulty is to find him when he isn't under the influence of drink," returned Jenkins. "It strikes me that the only likely time is early in the morning when he is leaving his home. But then he would be on his way to Brother Jorson's to quench his thirst and would be deaf to reason."

"It is a painful problem and I don't know what is the best to do," Dick sighed, as he donned his overcoat and hat and bade his friend good-night.

"Nor do I," thought Jenkins. "I wonder whether we can get Palmer into some sanitarium or institution where the poison can be eliminated from his system, and he be given a new start in life."

CHAPTER XVII

A DRUNKARD'S HOME

WHEN Reverend Herbert Hemingway was ordained as pastor of the Ampere church he was a young man whose sound Christian character and fine ability made him not only popular and useful in the community, but gave him a widespread reputation. His degree was conferred upon him before he was thirty years old. He received numerous offers from more prominent charges, but declined them all.

"Here is my field," he replied, "and so long as my people wish it, I shall stay with them."

The doctor was worldly wise. He intuitively saw where, when, and how property would rise in value. From his moderate salary he made careful investments, as the chances offered, and gradually became a wealthy man. He did not speculate, but bought real estate, and when he loaned money, did so at legal rates, refusing all

bonuses, which is only one of the many form of usury, and never took advantage of a person's financial distress.

Among the half-dozen houses which the doctor built was a small cottage at one end of Bear Valley. He officiated at the marriage of Owen Palmer and Molly Durham, and after their modest honeymoon they moved into the pretty building, where they had lived ever since. For two or three years the rent was paid regularly. The prospects of no couple could have been fairer, and it did the heart of the pastor good to know their happiness.

And then the evil days came. Owen took to drink; he neglected his work, became soured, and resented advice from every quarter. The doctor reasoned with him, and did all in his power to check his downward course. It is true that Palmer tried with might and main to break off his fatal habit, and sometimes succeeded for months at a time, only to fall again when the hopes of his wife and friends were at the highest. Finally the clergyman promised:

"For every year that you remain sober I shall charge you no rent; whenever you

give me your word of honor that you have not touched liquor for the previous twelve months, I shall hand you back the rent you have paid me, and shall do so all my life, with more pleasure than you can understand."

Only once did Palmer secure this "rebate." Then he gave up the struggle. "The infernal thirst has got me in its grip and there's no use fighting against it."

The wife, who knew of the agreement, took her hard-earned money to the doctor herself, for she felt that she and her husband had no claim upon it. The good man returned every penny.

"I cannot accept this; it has been too hardly earned by you. Do not bring me any more; perhaps it will be well not to tell Owen of it."

"Suppose he asks me?"

"Speak the truth at all times," replied the good man, as if shocked by the question; "deceit is not only wrong, but it never pays in the long run."

When little Molly came the day of regeneration seemed to have dawned at last. Her brightness and her winsomeness filled the hearts of the parents with delight.

Owen was proud of her; no parent could have loved his child more than he loved the little one whose blue eyes, fair hair, and correct features were those of her mother in miniature. He fondled her, danced her on his knee, and tossed her in the air, while she crowed with happiness. And the mother, who had been growing wan and pale, caught the new joy. Color came back to her cheeks and her eyes again grew luminous with the glow that had captured many a heart in the days when she was the most attractive young woman for many a mile around.

But the wife could never forget that awful night when the sleet beat against the window-panes and the wintry blast roared down the chimney. She had put Molly in her trundle-bed upstairs, and with no misgivings, sat beside the fire sewing. Owen had told her he would be late, because he had to meet a man at Ridgewood, and she never doubted but that he would return at the hour promised.

Suddenly she heard a shuffling step. Her heart stood still at the sound of the fumbling hand on the door. She sprang up, but before she could lift the latch, it was snapped

up from the outside, and Palmer lurched forward into a heap on the floor.

Two years later every one had given up all hope of Owen Palmer's reformation. There was a single exception, however; the thin, faded, patient wife still prayed and pleaded with her husband and hoped that his shackles would be broken. But the weary years dragged by and the poor wretch gave no sign. He ceased all pretense of work. Sometimes he was away over night, and then he lay on his bed stupefied. No one could remember seeing him sober at any time for months past.

Where did he get the money with which to buy drink? From the wife, who, when she gave it, knew what the result would be. Alcohol affects temperaments differently. There are a few who become genial and good-natured; others are simply stupid, while the majority are brutalized. Owen Palmer belonged to the last-named class. The hour came when he struck his wife. The first time was because she hesitated to give him the pittance she had been paid for doing the washing of a neighbor, under the plea that it was needed to buy food. With insane fury, after the dazed woman

had climbed to her feet and in a panic begged him not to kill her, he seized her by the throat and wrenched the few silver coins from her.

Little Molly was sitting in her high-chair at the table and screamed at the dreadful sight.

"Shut up!" he shouted to her, with upraised hand, "or I'll serve you the same way!"

The mother rushed between.

"Strike me, Owen, but don't harm her!" The little one gasped and tried to choke down the sobs that could not be wholly suppressed. The father with a single twinge of shame stamped out of the door, which he slammed shut, and was not seen again till the following night, when he staggered into the house and was helped to bed by the sorrowing wife.

Molly Palmer grew thinner, more silent, and more reserved each day, but in her weak way she tried to shield her husband from the censure of others.

"It is not Owen," she said many a time, "but the strong drink that he has tried hard to overcome; he will succeed with the help of Heaven one of these days."

But the most pitiful fact of all was the effect of this state of things upon little Molly. After the father had repeatedly repulsed her she shrank away from him. Many a time her big, terrified eyes peered from behind the skirts of her mother or the stair door, as he staggered into the room swearing and shouting for his food. She clung to her mother and would have fled upstairs, had she not been held back by the childish belief that she could help shield her against the savage father.

Molly was precocious beyond her years. Her natural brightness was intensified by suffering. For hours when her mother believed her asleep, she lay on her bed staring into the darkness, thinking. If her mother stole into the room, candle in hand, to see whether she was awake, Molly closed her eyes until she tiptoed out again.

She studied at home some with her mother, but by-and-by she heard of the new teacher, Mr. Chandler. Two girls stopped at her house and urged her to come to school. She begged permission of her mother, who hesitated, fearing that some of the thoughtless children would wound Molly's feelings by slurs against her father; but finally she gave

her consent, and the next morning Molly, with brighter eyes than usual, hied away to school.

Dick Chandler was right when he told Asaph Jenkins of the loving-kindness shown the newcomer by the boys and girls. Never by word or look was she reminded of the shadow that darkened her hearthstone. She was petted by all, and Dick was also right when he said that this was due to the sweet Christian spirit that pervaded the people of Ampere district. It was the aftermath of the revival harvest.

It will not be known until the last great day what good Doctor Hemingway effected during his labors in his Master's vineyard. He never let his left hand know what his right did. Having notified Mrs. Palmer that whatever purchases she made at the store of Deacon Whitsett would be paid in full, and having compelled her to promise that she would not hesitate to buy what she and her family needed, he impressed upon the deacon that he must not question any purchase by her, but send the bill to him. Further, the storekeeper was warned not to let any other person know of the arrangement. Whereupon the deacon kept the

woman promptly supplied, and as promptly sent the bill to the doctor, charging the highest rates he dared.

Upon the return of Dorothy Hemingway from Vassar College, she gave special attention to the unfortunate Mrs. Palmer. It was necessary that her father should tell his daughter of the agreement with the deacon, but it was hidden from all others. Dorothy asked for the section of Bear Hollow in the distribution of charity, and did much to lighten the gloom of that stricken household. Once she tried to plead with the father when she found him at home, but was insultingly repulsed. Thereafter the two avoided each other. If he happened to be in the house when she called, he went upstairs and stayed there until she left.

From the day that little Molly entered the public school her decline in strength was marked. It may have been that the close contact with other girls, all of whom had happy homes and loving fathers, reacted upon her sensitive spirit and made her feel more deeply the wretchedness and degradation of her own lot. She was a brave little one, however, and strove hard to cheer her

mother and to be thankful for such blessings as came to her. But the little figure grew more pitifully thin, the deep blue eyes seemed to expand, the face was whiter and the body weaker. Unsuspected by her loving teacher, there were days when she was hardly able to sit upright. Dick was a believer in play. He gently insisted that Molly should go outdoors at recess and join in the sports of her playmates, and he forbade her to do any studying at home. She remained away from school occasionally, returning with the excuse that she was suffering from a headache or her mother needed her, and finally she was absent two days, and Dick went to see her.

He found her seated in a big rocking-chair, with a pillow at her back. The father was upstairs asleep, and the mother was moving languidly about the room, her sunken cheeks showing traces of recent tears.

Dick was startled by the changed appearance of the little girl, but he forced himself to be cheerful as he sat down beside her chair and took the little hand in his own big palm.

"I'm not going to stand this," he said, with an assumed sternness which deceived

no one; "you don't know how much we all miss you at school. It isn't right; the boys and girls and I insist that you shall get strong and hurry back. Now, Molly," he added, shaking his finger almost against her nose, "I'll let you stay home—well, say two days more—and then if I don't find you playing tag when I go to school, I'm coming after you: what have you to say to that?"

"I'll come if I can, Mr. Chandler; I think you are a nice teacher and I want to go to school."

"Now, you are trying to make me blush," he protested, putting one hand over his face; "if I am a good teacher, as you say, it is because I have such good scholars, but you are the very best, and if you stay away there's no saying how horrid I may grow. So you see you mustn't wait too long."

He patted the child's golden head, and pausing on the threshold, playfully shook his finger at her again.

"Remember, if you are not on hand two days after to-morrow I'm coming after you, and you'll feel awfully sorry!"

CHAPTER XVIII

MOLLY

FROM Molly's home Dick walked rapidly to that of Doctor Gardiner, who lived a mile away in the direction of Riggsville. The physician was a corpulent, gray-haired man in middle life, with much experience and more skill than is the rule among rural practitioners. He was one of the first acquaintances the teacher made upon coming to Ampere, and the two men liked each other.

As Dick strode up the short lane to the handsome residence embowered among luxuriant vegetation, he saw the gig, which was a familiar sight bobbing round the country behind the gray horse. It was in front of the house, with the animal between the shafts. The physician was evidently about to start on his round of calls, but met the young man at the door of his office and invited him inside.

"Consumption," remarked the doctor,

looking with a laugh into the ruddy countenance; "you have it bad."

"Squire Redwood and his wife will agree to that, so far as their excellent food is concerned; but, doctor, I have called in behalf of another."

"Naturally; how can I serve your patient?"

"I have come direct from the home of Owen Palmer; I wish you to lose no time in going there, and giving your attention to his little girl."

"I was there this forenoon, and it is the third call in as many days; Doctor Hemingway asked me to do so. What of your visit?"

Dick gave the particulars.

"And so you warned Molly that if she didn't return to school at the end of two days, you would go after her and bring her back?"

"I did, as a little pleasantry."

"Well, Mr. Chandler, I am afraid you will never call for her and you will never see her in your school again."

"Why, doctor, you don't mean——"

"She is past medical help; she won't live at the most beyond a week; I shall not be

surprised if she passes away within half that time."

The teacher swallowed the lump in his throat.

"I never dreamed it was as bad as that! What is the matter with her?"

"'Galloping consumption.'"

"And she is only eight years old! I never heard of anything of the kind. Both her parents are naturally strong and rugged. What is the cause of it?"

"Well," said the physician gravely; "if it is ever justifiable to speak of a broken heart, it is in the case of the Palmer child; she is sinking into a swift decline. You have not heard her cough and she may not do so to a great extent, but her vitality is fast ebbing. You ask for the cause: it is Owen Palmer. The child is grieving herself to death because of him."

"Does he know it?"

Doctor Gardiner's lip curled.

"Know of it! If I could have my way, I should give that sodden wretch a dose of strychnine; it ought to have been done six years ago. If he is ever sober for ten seconds, he cannot help seeing the wreck he has caused."

Dick sat silent for a minute, so shocked by what he had learned that he could think of nothing to say.

"The girl is unusually bright and I am interested in her, but the most I can do is to smooth her last hours. I shall call again this evening, and shall look after her to the end which, as I told you, is near at hand."

The doctor rose to his feet and began drawing on his gloves. Dick did the same.

"I wonder," he said musingly, "whether the mother has any thought that she is so soon to lose her child."

"No, but Molly herself knows it."

"Why, doctor, what do you mean? Is it possible so young a person has actual knowledge of her impending death?"

"There's not a particle of doubt of it; I have seen it before; children as well as adults receive knowledge at such times which is denied those in health. It may astound you, Mr. Chandler, and perhaps you will not believe me, when I tell you that little Molly Palmer, at the moment she smiled over your threat of coming and taking her to school, knew of a certainty that you would never do so. She knows that her hours are numbered. She kept it from you, and spe-

cially keeps it from her mother, because she wishes to put off the truth to the last moment."

"Since you speak with such positiveness, may I ask your reasons?"

"Well, there are signs which a medical man observes that are not visible to others; I saw them to-day, but in Molly's case I went further. With the purpose of testing her, I said:

"'You must go back to school next Monday.'

"I first made sure that her mother was out of the room. The child glanced toward the door in that quick, alert way of hers, then gazed straight into my face, smiled, shook her head, and whispered: 'Don't tell mamma; you know!'"

"She said it because Another had whispered the solemn truth in her ear."

Doctor Gardiner smiled and made no reply. His faith in the glimpses which many gain of the Beyond, as they descend into the dark valley, was not as strong as that of the young man. The most that he would admit was, "We don't know."

At the evening meal, Dick told Squire Redwood and his wife of his call at the Palmer home and upon Doctor Gardiner,

with the sorrowful news that the child would not live more than a week at the most.

"It is a sad case," replied the squire; "I never knew one quite so sad."

"Is the family in want of anything?" asked the wife.

"They are overwhelmed with kindness; nothing that their neighbors can do for them is left undone."

"I saw Dorothy coming from Bear Hollow this afternoon," said the squire; "she told me the child was very ill."

"I shall call again to-morrow and see if I can do anything," said Dick.

"To-morrow night after prayer-meeting your charges against Lott Jorson are to be acted upon by the official board and you should be present," remarked the squire.

"I expect to be there. Will Jorson show up?"

"No fear of him; he is boiling over against you; says you are a marplot and he's going to show you up; you ain't doing anything to 'uplift the community,' but are pulling it down; when he gits through with you, you will sneak away from Ampere and never show yourself here again. Being as he's the accused, he has been sarved with a

copy of the charges, and of course has a right to be present and answer 'em. I've no idee what line he will take in his answer."

"It makes small difference."

Dick decided to attend the meeting at the church the following evening. When the unpleasant business regarding Jorson was over, he would walk to Bear Hollow and call at the Palmer home. He learned through the day from Mrs. Redwood, who had been there, that little or no change was perceptible in Molly, except that she seemed a trifle more feverish, and in better spirits than would be supposed.

Dick had just finished supper and was in the act of rising from the table, when Tige the dog was heard barking outside. The two men peered through the window.

"It's Doctor Gardiner!" whispered Dick.

"It must be that he has come for you."

It was growing dark when the two walked out into the open space to meet the physician, whose gray nag was trotting toward them. Before making the turn that would bring the head of the horse the other way, the doctor drew rein. The couple walked out beside the carriage and anxiously leaned over to hear his words.

"Mr. Chandler, I was told to ask you to call at Palmer's as soon as you can."

"Any change, doctor?" asked Dick anxiously.

"Little Molly won't last through the night."

"I shall not lose a minute," replied Dick, darting into the house, donning his overcoat and cap, and hurrying out again. While he was absent, the doctor talked with the squire, then chirruped to the horse, which resumed its trot down the lane.

His call that afternoon had told the skilled eye of the physician that the child's life was near its close. As was his duty, he took the mother aside and gently broke the news. She accepted it more bravely than he had expected.

"I knew it was coming, but didn't think it was so near," she said faintly.

"You had better make her bed below stairs; it will be easier for you. Where's Owen?"

"He went to Ridgewood this morning and is not yet back."

"Small difference; he has ruined your life and robbed you of your child."

"Oh, doctor, don't say that. He has

striven hard to overcome his weakness and will yet do so."

The doctor checked the impatient reply that came to his lips, but it was because he did not wish to add to the woe of the poor woman.

"I can do nothing more," he added, as he walked out to his gig; "she is not suffering pain: you will not have long to wait."

Doctor Gardiner had gone but a little way when he saw Palmer coming toward him. He was walking fast and quite steady. The doctor checked his horse abruptly and the man halted with a scared expression.

"I see you are sober," was the comment of the physician; "where are you going?"

"Home; I don't feel right about little Molly."

"How do you feel about yourself? Your child won't live till morning. If you had been a man, instead of a cur, she would be well and strong this minute. It is fortunate for her that she will soon be beyond reach of your brutality."

"O my God!" wailed the father, throwing up his arms.

But Doctor Gardiner paid no attention and drove on toward Squire Redwood's.

CHAPTER XIX

GOING HOME

THE lower room in the Palmer cottage, connecting with the dining and sitting apartment, had always been the spare bedroom. The mother carried her daughter there, laid her on the soft mattress which had not been occupied for years, and tenderly tucked the sheets and blankets around her. They were clean and fragrant and the couch was as downy as any the invalid could wish. By leaving the communicating door open the warmth from the fire on the hearth was diffused within the sick-room, and the parent had the little one always under her eye while attending to her household work.

The neighbors had been in and out, and Doctor Gardiner had been gone but a brief while when the pale mother seated herself beside the bed. Molly lay with her head slightly raised on the pillow. Her eyes were unusually large and dark. She reached out and fondled the hand that smoothed

away the hair from her hot forehead. She coughed violently once or twice, but the spasm quickly passed. It seemed to the mother that the fountain of her grief was dried up, for she could weep no more; but tears could have given no voice to the anguish that filled her heart.

Catching her eye, Molly smiled in that radiant way that was like the smile of an angel. She gently asked:

"Did the doctor tell you, mamma?"

"Did he tell me what?" the elder asked in turn, though in her shuddering dread she knew full well the meaning of the question.

"You know."

"Did he say anything to you about it?" parried the mother.

"No; because he knew that I knew. Last night when you were sleeping, some one awoke me in my bed upstairs; I opened my eyes, and the room was all light and I saw a shining angel standing by the side of the bed. He bent over and said so gently, 'I shall come for you to-morrow evening; let your heart be at peace; I shall comfort mamma and papa.'

"I didn't tell Doctor Gardiner that, but it made me happy and content, though I

feel bad that I am going to leave you and papa."

The little one reached up her arms and the mother clasped her convulsively to her breast. She could not speak, but once more tears came to her relief.

"Then, when the doctor was going to leave, I asked him to tell Mr. Chandler that I wanted to see him. He has been so kind to me that I want to bid him good-by, and then he will bid good-by for me to all the boys and girls in school, for they have all been as nice as they could be. Pretty soon papa will come."

"I am afraid not," replied the mother with the great fear in her heart; "you know how it is with him."

"I know how it has been ever since I was a baby, but last night when that angel was with me I seemed to feel that papa would be taken care of."

And Molly patted the mother's hand, and would not let it go, adding, "Yes, and papa will soon be here."

"Do not set your heart on it, darling; I will tell him after you are gone."

Suddenly Molly sat up, with her head clear of the pillow.

"Hark! didn't I tell you!" she cried, her face aglow.

At that instant the amazed mother heard the click of the gate; then there were hurrying footsteps over the walk; and some one sprang upon the porch and hastily pushed open the door.

"I knew you would come, papa!"

She held up her arms, and the mother set her chair slightly back to make room for the white-faced, terrified, and sober husband. He appeared not to see his wife, but striding forward, he gathered the little one in his arms, buried his head in the blankets which covered her lap, and moaned and sobbed in the abandonment of grief. The wife sat motionless and mute.

When the stricken father regained partial control of himself he raised his head, his face shining with tears, and wailed:

"Oh, Molly, you must not leave me; you shall not die! you must stay with me! I can't live without you!"

"Why, papa, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she asked, with her bright reproving smile, as she reached up and brushed away the hair from his clammy brow: "I am going to leave you because the Saviour wants

me, and you are going to stay here with mamma and never, never drink any more. Isn't that so, papa?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" exclaimed the parent in the bewilderment of grief: "I shall never forgive myself—I can never forgive myself!—God ought to hurl me down into torture, for I am the basest wretch that ever lived! Stay with me, Molly! Don't leave me!"

And then with a prescience far beyond her years Molly continued to smile and brush the hair from her father's forehead.

The marvelous calm of the child affected the father, who raised his head, though he held her closer than before.

"So you have made up your mind to leave us, darling?" he asked, as if the answer to the question rested wholly with the child.

"The Saviour told me last night that He wanted me, so it won't do for me to hold back."

Just then a knock was heard on the outer door. The mother quietly opened it, and Dick Chandler stood revealed in the firelight.

"Doctor Gardiner said Molly wished to

see me," he explained, as he stepped within the room.

"Come with me," she whispered.

Walking softly into the bedroom, the teacher saw Molly sitting partly upright, one of the pillows behind her shoulders. The father, with unexpected self-control, moved his chair back to make room for him, nodding to the teacher, who gave him no heed. He saw only the dying child.

"Well, my little friend, I would go a good way to meet you; I got word from Doctor Gardiner, and I ran so fast I almost went away by your house before I could put on the brakes and stop. Wasn't that a funny thing to do?"

And gently laughing, he patted the child's burning cheek.

"I wanted you to come so I could say good-by," smiled Molly; "I love you because you have been so kind to me, and so have all the boys and girls at school. Mr. Chandler, do you know I was afraid all the time that some of them would say something that would make me feel bad, but not one of them ever did. Wasn't that splendid? They were so kind and thoughtful that I love them all."

"Who could say anything to hurt your feelings? I shall certainly give your message to the boys and girls and I shall never forget you. Let me tell you, Molly, that your sweet, gentle, patient Christian ways have done me and all the pupils more good than you ever dreamed of. You are only going a little ahead of us; by-and-by mamma and papa" (for the first time Dick seemed to see that drawn face at his elbow) "and I and all the friends will follow you, and then won't we have a happy time when we reach Heaven and all shake hands again!"

The chief impressiveness of the words lay in the voice and the manner of their utterance. Dick laughed softly, and clapped his hands when he spoke of the final reunion. He seemed really gleeful over the prospect, and for the first time in many a day Molly laughed outright.

Dick felt that the remaining minutes belonged to the father and mother. No one else had the right to intrude upon them. He sprang lightly to his feet, as if he had forgotten himself. He had not removed his overcoat, and now with cap in hand, he stood by the bed and kissed the child on the forehead.

He waved his hand as he passed out of the room and drew the door shut. He did this that the parents and child should be left to themselves. Friends were certain to come soon and he remained in the sitting-room that he might prevent them from intruding.

The wife and husband knew why the caller closed the door of the bedroom. So did Molly, who felt a thrill of gratitude for the thoughtful act.

"Mamma," she said; "I want you to sit on that side of the bed, and, papa, you are to sit on this side; you will be close together and I shall be between you."

Silently the parents did as requested. Each suspected what was coming and was prepared for it.

"Now you must do just as I tell you," she added, with a warning shake of the head.

"You can ask us nothing that we won't do," replied the father brokenly, keeping back his grief by a supreme effort.

"Take mamma's hand."

The two palms met halfway across the bed and over the emaciated body.

"Now, kiss each other."

"YOU WILL NEVER DRINK ANY MORE, PAPA?"

For the first time in years the husband thus saluted his wife.

"I want you to promise me that you will never, never, never drink any more, papa."

Owen Palmer raised his free hand.

"I swear——"

"No; I don't want you to swear; give me your promise—that is enough for God and me."

"I give you my promise, darling; I have tried to stop before, but now I shall do it forever."

The light which glowed in the face of the dying child told her happiness more deeply than words could do. The parents were still controlling themselves by a strength that was taxed to the limit.

"Kiss me—quick!"

Both leaned over and pressed their lips in turn to those of the child. They did so several times. Then the mother raised her head, and looked down in the face which was like that of an angel.

"She has gone!" she whispered.

In the brief time that Dick Chandler waited in the dining-room, Mrs. Redwood and two other ladies silently entered. He whispered to each, and all sat down. From

the room beyond only a confused murmur came. Dick could not distinguish any words, but by-and-by Mrs. Redwood arose, stepped to the door, and gently pushed it open for an inch or two. She softly closed it again and came back.

"It's all over!" she whispered.

The group talked together for a few minutes in hushed voices. The women decided to remain, and Dick, seeing nothing for him to do, went out.

It was so early in the evening that, instead of going home, he walked rapidly to Ampere church, arriving a few minutes previous to the close of the prayer-meeting. Doctor Hemingway had charge, and just before pronouncing the benediction, he asked the members of the official board to remain, as there was some business to come before it. The others slowly filed out, exchanging greetings as they went.

Almost the first person whom Dick noticed, as he walked part way up the aisle, was Lott Jorson, with a brazen smirk on his face. He was sitting on the other side of the room and about as far forward as himself.

When the janitor closed the doors there

were left the four members of the official board, Doctor Hemingway, chairman by virtue of his office, Dick Chandler, and Lott M. Jorson. Two of the officers were Squire Redwood and Elder Allen Q. Whitsett, who, having once been deacon, was always referred to by that title.

"My brethren," said the grave doctor, "I hold in my hand a document which the secretary will please read."

Thereupon that officer stood up and read in a clear voice the paper which Dick had written and submitted to the board. In substance it charged Lott M. Jorson with engaging in the selling of intoxicating drinks, thereby scandalizing his profession as a member of the church, and doing woeful injury to the community. The charges recited further that Jorson had been remonstrated with by the chairman of the board, Doctor Hemingway, by Squire Silas Redwood, and by Richard Chandler. Despite these protests and pleadings, he continued his evil ways, showed no signs of repentance, and was thereby unfit to remain longer on the church roll of Ampere church.

The moment the reading of the charges was finished, Dick arose.

"Mr. Chairman, if it is in order, I should like to make a statement."

"You have permission to do so," said the doctor, inclining his head.

Dick walked forward, so as to face every one in the room. Squire Redwood, who knew him better than any one present, saw he was laboring under great excitement and striving hard to control his emotions. But the voice which in the silence filled the room was even, deliberate, and without a tremor.

"I wish to explain the cause of my tardiness this evening. I came here from the home of Owen Palmer. I was asked to go there by his little daughter, a member of my school, and one of the sweetest children that ever lived. I stayed there until she died. Yes, my brethren, Molly Palmer has passed from earth to her heavenly home. She died of a broken heart, because her father was a drunkard.

"That father became a drunkard through the liquor he bought at the 'Traveler's Rest'; he told me so himself. Sweet Molly Palmer did not die; she was murdered, and there sits the murderer!"

As Chandler rang out the last awful

words he leaned over and shook his finger at Landlord Jorson. For a full minute no one moved or seemed to breathe. Dick kept his feet and fixed his burning gaze upon the wretch.

And then Lott Jorson, with his jaw hanging, his face crimson, and his bulky frame tottering, slowly climbed to his feet.

"Did—you—say—Owen Palmer's child is dead?" he stammered.

"I did, and you killed her!" thundered Dick.

Without another word, the culprit fumbled around until he found his hat. Then he turned about, staggered down the aisle, and lurched off in the darkness.

CHAPTER XX

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER

No funeral in the Ampere church was more numerously attended than that of Molly Palmer. Not a member of the public school was absent, and it seemed as if every family, with less than half a dozen exceptions, crowded into the old building.

Two nights after the service, Owen Palmer knocked at the door of Squire Redwood's house, and was admitted with a word of welcome.

"Mr. Chandler is expecting you; right upstairs; this way."

Dick met the caller at the door of his room and motioned him to a seat. Placing himself opposite, he said:

"I wish to have a talk with you, Owen; it is going to be straight from the shoulder; are you ready for it?"

"The plainer the better; your words can't be too hot for me; I wonder that decent people speak to me."

"It is because you have been decent for the past few days, but perhaps I am wrong —it is through respect for your wife and love for the little one that is gone."

Owen Palmer was dressed in a neat business suit furnished by Doctor Hemingway. His face showed signs of the suffering through which he had lately passed. He was nervous, restless, and weak—a condition due to the sudden cessation of stimulants.

Dick determined to probe without mercy.

"I judge you haven't drunk any liquor since Molly died?"

"Of course I haven't," was the half-indignant reply.

"When are you going to begin again?"

"Why, Mr. Chandler, what a question! You know of my promise to Molly, only a few minutes before she passed away."

"Was that the first promise of the kind you ever made?"

"No—but things were never so bad as when I gave my darling my solemn word never to drink again."

"You have signed the pledge; you have promised your suffering wife to quit; you have assured Doctor Hemingway and others that you had stopped for good. You

did abstain for months, and once for a year; which proved that you can stop if you wish to; do you think you can hold out for a year this time?"

"I hope God will strike me down if I do not."

"Fudge! What does that amount to? It is the man who is the most vehement in his promises that is the first to break them."

"I am sorry," said the grieved caller, "that you have lost all faith in me."

"I haven't said that. You are in earnest now, but I don't know how long your resolution will last; you thought you were in earnest before, but fell again and again. If you go about it the right way, you will win; if you don't, you will fail. What method have you in mind?"

"Why, I have quit forever."

"You have not, unless you follow a few common-sense rules. In the first place, you must pray to God with all your soul and strength that He will aid you."

"I have done that many times since Molly's death and shall keep it up."

"Good! that is the first all-important step. Let me say I have little faith in many of the death-bed conversions or in lasting

reformations caused by grief over the loss of some loved one. Time soothes our sorrows, and the temptation returns and gains power. The impression made by the loss of your child will always retain a certain force, but it will not be enough. You have to have the grace of God in your heart, and when you have that—are thoroughly converted—you will find that you can exert your own will to some advantage.

"But you have got to do your part manfully.

"No truer words were ever spoken than those which declare that God helps those who help themselves. 'Trust in God and keep your powder dry,' is another version of the truth. A man can't sit down, fold his arms, and wait for his Creator to do the work which the Creator means he shall do himself. Do with your might what your hands find to do, and ask Heaven to bless your efforts. In one sense, you must tread the wine-press alone; God won't save you unless you do all you can to save yourself.

"I heard John B. Gough, the matchless temperance orator, who had the delirium-tremens twice after he first signed the pledge, declare that the yearning for whisky,

when once rooted within a person's system, can never be destroyed. It will stay there until his last breath; but it can be put to sleep, and it will slumber until you awake it. If you use the simplest sense, you will be safe.

"Never go where liquor is sold; don't keep it in your house; don't listen to temptation; don't brood over your grief; keep busy; the best panacea for affliction is hard work for the body and mind. One truth I would burn into your soul, as if with a red-hot iron. Beware of the widely advertised 'bitters,' which are guaranteed to cure indigestion, a 'tired feeling,' and about all the ills that flesh is heir to. The papers are filled with puffs of such nostrums; I have seen some of them in religious journals; the proprietors of these 'bitters' are becoming millionaires, because the stuff they sell at an enormous profit is made up mostly of poor whisky, with a few weak herbs added, partially to disguise the fact.

"The proprietor of a large drug store in New York told me he stopped selling all the brands of 'bitters,' when he discovered he was making drunkards of his customers. Good old church members who hadn't

touched a drop of spirits for years were buying the 'bitters,' praising them, and marching steadily down to a drunkard's grave. Many who had reformed were ruined by this insidious guise of poison. Some of the most popular of these 'bitters' have been analyzed and found to contain fifty, sixty, and more per cent. of alcohol. Regarding all of them, 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' the accursed thing.

"Make up your mind that you are going to have a hard fight, but understand, too, that, with God's help, you are going to win. Physically you are in wretched form; for years you have been a loafer and a vagabond; your system is sodden with whisky; you would have died long ago but for your wife and her friends."

"I know it," said Palmer in a choking voice; "and I ought to have died. I blamed Lott Jorson for selling me whisky before I had formed a taste for it, but it was my fault; he didn't compel me to drink, and I knew it was wrong."

"You take a sensible view of the matter. Landlord Jorson will sell no more whisky as a member of Ampere church; he was cast out the other night, as he ought to have

been cast out years ago, but that has nothing to do with the present business.

"I warned you against tasting any of the so-called 'bitters,' but in making this fight for life you have the right and it is your duty to use all the helps within reach. It might strengthen you to spend a few months in some of the sanitariums, but none of them of itself will cure you. Scores of such patients go back to drinking again.

"Here is a remedy," holding up a bottle, "the result of a careful and long-continued experimentation by a scientific physician, which will act as a tonic to help build up your wasted forces, and as an antidote to the liquor thirst. It has been helpful to many. I had the prescription filled at the Ridgewood drug-store, and you can get it renewed. With that and the help of God and your own determination you will conquer."

As the grateful Palmer rose from his chair, the teacher laid his hand on his shoulder and said with deep earnestness:

"Remember what I told you a few minutes ago: all that you can do is to put the tiger in your veins to sleep: don't wake it!"

Dick walked downstairs with his guest. Aunty Redwood had retired and the squire

sat by the table reading his Bible. He stood up and took the hand of Palmer, who hesitated by the door.

"Owen, you don't know how pleased and thankful I feel; you have started on the right way and you need never stumble. I understand that you intend to ask admission to the church at the next communion?"

"Yes," was the humble reply; "I shall be the most unworthy of all the candidates, but with the help of God I shall never turn back."

"Trust Him fully and do your own duty; keep away from temptation."

"That is what Mr. Chandler told me."

Palmer again warmly shook hands with these friends, and passed out of the door. He had taken his last drop of liquor.

CHAPTER XXI

LOTT JORSON

TIGE, Squire Redwood's dog, had been allowed to come into the house, and now lay in front of the fire, with eyes closed and nose between his outstretched paws. Suddenly he raised his head and pricked up his ears.

"It is late, but some one is coming up the lane," said the squire, and the two men listened.

Meanwhile, Owen Palmer had passed out the gate and down the lane, shaded on both sides with rows of poplars. There was no moon, but the myriads of stars gleamed in the cold, clear sky. Palmer saw a shadowy form coming toward him from the main road, but as the two drew nearer the stranger shifted to the shadows under the trees, where only a vague sight of him was given as the two came opposite.

"Good-evening!" called Owen in a cheery voice.

"Good-evening," was the mumbled response.

These two had been old acquaintances for years, and yet neither recognized the voice of the other, despite the fact that a person's voice lingers longer in one's memory than anything else. Owen Palmer stepped off with the elastic, confident tread of hope. The other man shuffled and shambled like one in despair, whose trembling strength barely held him up. He was on his way to see Squire Redwood and Dick Chandler. No wonder neither suspected the identity of the other.

By-and-by the listeners heard the opening and closing of the gate and the unsteady steps. Tige slouched toward the door and growled, but a word from his master caused him to lie down again. It being certain that some one was coming, the squire opened the door, that the light might aid the caller as it had aided Dick months before.

The next moment the two were shocked. Lott Jorson, pale, haggard, and tottering with weakness, stumbled into the room, and dropped into the nearest chair without uttering a word. The squire closed the door against the nipping air, and looked down

at the man. His eyes were staring and bloodshot and he seemed dazed.

"What is the matter with you, Lott?" asked the old man. Dick suspected he had been drinking hard and was on the verge of delirium. He stood ready to protect the squire, should it become necessary.

"It ain't that," he said in a rasping, husky voice, reading their thoughts; "I haven't drank a drop for days; I believe I'm dying."

At the words and looks of the poor wretch, the hearts of Dick and the squire were filled with pity. They had felt hardly toward the landlord of the "Traveler's Rest," and thought he ought to be punished, but all that was changed now. Dick stepped in front of him and said cheerily:

"Pull yourself together, man!"

Jorson sat panting and looking at the two in front of him, as if he failed to understand the words.

"Why, Lott, what is the matter with you?" asked Squire Redwood; "you are with friends."

Despite Jorson's declaration that he had not been drinking, both the squire and Dick doubted its truth. He was in a state of

collapse. They waited a minute or two, while he partially succeeded in doing what Dick had urged him to do—pulled himself together.

"You are not dying any more than we are," said the younger man, "but you are in pretty bad shape. What brought you here to-night?"

The miserable man now found his tongue. Fixing his gaze upon each in turn, he said huskily, between gasps and pants,

"I have sinned away the day of grace! I am lost—lost—lost!"

"You have no right to talk that way," replied the squire with stern sympathy. "What have you done that makes you feel so bad?"

"Yes; I murdered little Molly Palmer, as you said, Mr. Chandler; I have ruined her father; I have ruined others; and I am sinking into perdition."

"No doubt you have done much evil," said Dick, "but Owen Palmer is safe from further harm; he left here a few minutes ago; he will never drink spirits again."

"He must have been the man I met in the lane, but I didn't know his voice."

"What has brought about this convic-

tion, Mr. Jorson?" asked Dick, who like the squire now seated himself in front of the sufferer.

"It was them words you said the other night after prayer-meeting; I thought I could get back at you, but something gripped my heart and a Voice thundered in my ears, 'The words are true; you are a murderer!' I staggered out of church and hardly know how I got home. Two men sat by the fire in the bar-room; I drove them out and locked the door; then I dropped on my knees and began praying, but God wouldn't listen to me! My wife upstairs heard me and came down scared almost out of her senses. She prayed with me, but I told her it was no use. Then she said, 'Lott, if you feel so bad about selling whisky, as I have felt ever since we were married, why don't you stop it?' 'I will from this minute,' I replied, bounding to my feet.

"But that wasn't enough; I smashed every bottle of liquor in the bar; then I went down cellar and opened the spigots in the casks there, and let out the last drop; when I was through, not a pint of the stuff was left in the tavern."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick; "that proves you were in earnest. How did you feel after doing that?"

"A little better; I walked the floor all night; my wife begged me to come to bed, but there was no sleep for me; every few minutes, I dropped on my knees, and when I wasn't doing that I prayed as I walked. I kept it up till the sun was shining through the windows; then I was so tired out I tumbled onto the bed and slept a little while, but such awful dreams as I had! It was almost worse than being awake!

"I didn't open the tavern the next day, nor during any day since. Folks thought it was on account of the funeral of Palmer's little girl, but so far as selling liquor is concerned, *I* am through."

"You have done the right thing, Mr. Jorson."

"But I can't undo all the evil I have done!" wailed the sufferer; "I can never, never do that; I am doomed!"

"God never turns away from the truly penitent," said the squire; "let us kneel, and I will beg Him to hear you."

And then the three poured out their prayers. Jorson moaned and writhed in agony

of spirit. When the petition was finished the squire said: "Now, Dick!"

And he prayed from the depths of his heart. He reminded the Heavenly Father that He had said He would hear whoever called upon Him with sincere penitence of heart, and he begged Him to answer the prayer of the man who thus repented so truly of his sins.

"Now, Lott!" gently added the squire.

The man stumbled and halted and jumbled his words, but the others helped him by interjecting pleas of their own. Finally the three rose from their knees and seated themselves.

"I feel better," said Jorson, with surprising calmness; "I believe God does answer prayer."

"Why, my dear brother, He always does —not in every instance as we wish Him to answer, but in the best way for us. You are deeply sorry for your sins; they have been many and He has made you realize them to their full extent. True, you cannot undo the evil you have done, nor can we recall the angry word, the impure thought or the wicked act; but we can rid our hearts of all of these, and henceforward lead clean,

pure, and Christian lives. That is what you mean to do?"

"God being my helper, I will!" replied Jorson with a fervency that thrilled his listeners; "tell me what I ought to do."

"Just what you have said you mean to do! Never sell or give another glass of intoxicants to any person; sign the pledge, and set a good example by living as close to your Saviour every day as you can. Surely you can do much to atone for the past."

When, a half-hour later, Lott Jorson bade his friends good night, he walked down the lane with a stride which resembled that of the man whom he met some time before. There could never be any question over the sincerity of the landlord's conversion. He proved it by his deeds. The "Traveler's Rest" was opened again, but never during Jorson's lifetime was a glass of liquor sold over the bar. Temperance drinks could be procured, but nothing else.

The fight in the legislature over the local option bill resulted in defeat for the temperance people. The brewers and liquor men used too much money. More than one lawmaker, who went to the capitol deeply in debt, returned home in the spring, paid

off the mortgage on his farm or house, bought a piano, and in one or two instances, was able to send his wife and daughters on a trip to Europe.

But the good folks were undismayed, and renewed the battle year after year, and by-and-by won their victory. The day came when local option was carried and the State was a "white" one. Lott Jorson applied for a renewal of his license and got it. He did so on the suggestion of Squire Redwood, Dick Chandler, and Asaph Jenkins, who insisted upon paying the fee.

"That will shut off any other applicant for the present," said Jenkins, "though some fool may get another next year, but, if so, we'll cook his goose for him."

"How?" asked Dick.

"We'll boycott him; after he has stood that a few months, I'll go around, and offer to bear the expense of moving him and his family to the poorhouse; he'll thank me and be glad to accept the offer."

It was an impressive sight, when, at the next communion, among the twenty-odd candidates who went forward, were Owen Palmer and Lott M. Jorson. The sight melted many to tears, and the aged pastor

nearly broke down during the solemn services.

Dick Chandler held many consultations with Doctor Hemingway, Asaph Jenkins, Squire Redwood, and the daughter of the venerable clergyman. The burden of their anxiety was how to hold the Ampere people up to the spiritual plane to which they had been lifted by the unprecedented revival. The conclusion was that it must be done largely by meeting the needs of both sexes and by interesting the men and boys. Preaching and appeals were not sufficient; innocent, if not instructive, entertainments must be furnished: there must be safe outlets for the bubbling energy of the youths. The debating school had already grown popular: men who had not spoken in public eagerly set forth their views and were prone to continue their arguments after adjournment. Buck Smith several times opened the debate and proved himself a foeman worthy of the steel of men more than double his age. Even Ike Flynn became one of the verbal gladiators and now and then carried off the honors.

The singing school, under the charge of Asaph Jenkins, with his marvelous voice and

sunny good nature, drew attendants from beyond the limits of the Ampere district. His ready wit would crop out at the most unexpected times. One evening Dick Chandler sang bass in a quartette and did it well.

"Much obliged," commented Jenkins without the trace of his one-sided smile; "but I shall be more obliged if next time, Mr. Chandler, you try to sing bass to the piece the other three are singing."

"I'll settle with you after school," whispered Dick warningly.

Young Chandler's observation and experience in teaching were of vast help in his conduct of the Sunday-school. Regarding it as the nursery of the church, he could not help seeing that in many cases it fell far short of its mission, or even proved of no real benefit to the children. He observed that boys and girls at the age of fifteen or sixteen began to lost their interest, and unless they were led into the spiritual realm, drifted away and were lost to the school and church. He felt that to draw the school to the spiritual realm it should be pervaded at all times by a spiritual atmosphere; and that the superintendent, as the head, must

radiate it; it must glow in his face, be heard in his voice, in the selection of topics, in his comments thereon, in his everyday life, and in his solicitude for the welfare of his pupils.

The teachers must be the same as he, Chandler decided. One who is not a professing Christian in charge of a class, perfunctorily directing them in the better way, and yet refusing to go that way himself, is always a sight to make angels weep. On the other hand, he understood that there are good persons who undertake to teach in the Sunday-school from a sense of duty. They deserve respect, but are ignorant, and know little or nothing of child-nature. Such instructors wind their arms around the neck of a boy and hold it there through most of the lesson. Nothing can be more repulsive to a healthy red-blooded lad than such fondling, especially when his classmates wink at him as he disgustedly peers out from under the teacher's encircling arm.

Many another teacher, when a lad whispers, solemnly reaches out his hand and pinches his ear, thereby rousing passionate anger. Still another may make himself popular with his boys by spending the time

in discussing the merits of the respective presidential candidates or relating stories.

The literary and social features have their place, but that is always secondary to the spiritual aim of the instruction. Little children should be taught the simplest elements of Christianity as given in the catechism. The youngest understanding can grasp the beauty and duty of truthfulness, obedience, and the Golden Rule. No explanation of the doctrines should be attempted during such tender years. Bible incidents, and anecdotes with a distinct spiritual drift may be used tactfully. Of late years object teaching has been made helpful. After the age of ten, children should be taught the nature of sin, the fact that they are sinners, and the necessity of the great change in their natures. Being "born again" must be clearly explained to them—otherwise their ideas will be hopelessly confused.

The danger period for boys and girls is, perhaps, between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years. It is at that critical time that they are apt to be led away from spiritual things by social attractions, by the love of worldly amusements, and by the exuber-

ant energy natural to youths on the threshold of manhood and womanhood. Too often the methods adopted to retain these are lectures, music, and entertainments, without a spark of spirituality. These have their use, but at all times the one dominant, all-controlling, never-swerving aim should be spirituality.

CHAPTER XXII

RIVALS

AFTER a while Dick found a fly in the ointment. Nothing could subdue or lessen the sweet consciousness of having added to the talent which his Master had given him. The fact that he saw the garnering of the harvest, that the marvelous work was going on, was a happiness to which nothing else in the world can be worthy of comparison.

None the less it is part of the discipline and training of good men that they shall meet with the vexations that are the common lot of mortals. What credit belongs to a person for being good, when it is perfectly easy for him to be so? It is he who fights, who when bowled over clambers to his feet and is at it again, who never says die, but struggles on to the end—it is he who wins the crown.

One day in early spring when Dick strolled out to the parsonage to take dinner with Doctor Hemingway and his daughter,

he met a stranger, who had gone thither to remain over Sunday. He was an effeminate-looking young man, with a budding mustache, and was faultlessly dressed. He wore eyeglasses, dandled a thin, willowy gold-headed cane, and had a vapid expression, as if bored by everything with which he came in contact.

Dorothy introduced him as Clarence Dubois of New York. She had met him while a student at Vassar. In truth, she and Dubois's sister were fond of each other, which fact explains the acquaintanceship of the young man with the daughter of Doctor Hemingway.

Dick tried to like the fellow for his friend's sake, but somehow or other, as the evening advanced, his repugnance deepened. Dubois had a tenor voice and sang well; he possessed some gifts in the way of conversation, but clearly he was not to be compared mentally with Dorothy Hemingway. She was vastly his superior.

"It is plain that she likes him," mused Dick, while walking homeward that evening. "He is good-looking, fashionably dressed, and abounds with the small talk which pleases the best of girls. There is

no mistake about his being in love with her; I saw that at once; no doubt they are engaged. But what if they are?" Dick suddenly demanded of himself—"it's none of my business."

Resolving to think no more about it, he struck into a vigorous pace, only soon to lag and revert to the theme which he could not drive away.

"He snubbed me once or twice, but I don't mind that. I can afford to ignore such trifles, but there is one thing about young women which I can't understand.

"Now and then a bright, good, intellectual woman will marry a young man who is far below her mentally, morally, and in every worthy attribute.

"Dorothy can make no greater mistake; it will mar her whole life; I do not understand why her father permits it. But she is old enough to make her own choice, and anyway it's none of my business," repeated Dick, striding off again with a quickened pace.

There had been a sharp rivalry for five or six years between the ball nines of Ampere and Ridgewood, the adjoining district. They generally played three games each

season, the victory swinging from one side to the other. The Ridgewoods won all three games during the summer preceding the coming of the new teacher, and boasted that they would repeat the humiliating defeat the next season.

Dick Chandler was chosen captain of the Amperes, and as soon as the weather warranted, the players began practice. Since he had no bad habits and never neglected exercise, he was in as good condition as at the opening of work at college, when he helped win the intercollegiate championship.

Buck Smith was the pitcher and Ike Flynn the catcher, the other positions being filled by husky young men whose skill pleased Captain Dick. He assumed his old place at third base, where he showed how to snatch up balls and line them across the diamond. At the same time his coolness, his encouraging words, and his hopefulness inspired the other players. He gave them points in batting, in running bases, in instant catching of signals, in bunting, in double plays, in alertness, and indeed in all the requirements of the game. He proved his versatility by taking his place behind the bat and throwing to second so as to head

off a runner trying to steal the base. He particularly impressed upon Ike Flynn the advantage of signaling to the pitcher in such a way that no opponent could possibly detect his meaning, when Buck was ordered to throw to any one of the bases to catch an opponent playing too far off.

At the same time he told the basemen always to be on the watch to take such a throw, for a failure was sure to prove disastrous. Then Dick strove to instruct the outfielders how to gauge the flight of a ball the instant it was struck—when to dance backward, when to turn and run with the sphere, and when to dash in and get it, either on the fly, or by trapping in time to throw to a base or to the plate.

The result of this excellent instruction was that when the two nines clashed on the Ampere grounds the Ridgewoods were defeated by a score of eight to three. Neither club had ever seen such playing as that of the Ampere third baseman. Not only did he capture the most difficult grounders that came anywhere near him, but he shot them, when necessary, into the capacious mitt of the first baseman, who never had to step off the bag to stop the unerring throws. He

caught two twisting fouls far back of third, one so difficult that he made a double play with the help of the Ampere man on second.

When he, as leading batsman, took his position at the plate, he struck at the first ball pitched, and drove it so far over the heads of the fielders that he trotted leisurely around the bases. The second time up he made a three-bagger, after which the opposing pitcher showed his sense by passing him to his base. The first time he did this, Dick immediately stole second. Undue confidence led him to try for third, only to be nipped by a lightning-like throw of the Ridgewood catcher.

The Ampere boys were naturally in high spirits when the game ended with a decisive victory for their side. The Ridgewoods were chagrined, and had little to say, but it was clear they had no thought of giving up the fight.

"You did well, boys," said Dick, with a glowing face, when he and his players came together after the game; "you never pitched better, Buck; and, Ike, you didn't have a passed ball; not only that, but you nailed every one who tried to steal second."

"Pshaw! what's the use of talking?" re-

plied Buck, blushing under the praise; "you won the game for us."

"That's so," added the first baseman; "all I had to do was to stand like a wooden Indian and close my mitts when the ball hit 'em."

"One man can't play a whole game of ball," replied Dick.

"But he can do a mighty lot toward it," said the center fielder; "you did more than all the others in keeping the balls from getting out to us."

"Now, Larry," said Dick reprovingly; "how about that skyscraper that you danced back and took with one hand and had to make a big jump to do it?"

"Yes, and the very next one got away from me."

"We are all liable to slips," replied Dick; "the best players in the league have their off days."

"I don't believe you ever had one," chimed in the right fielder, a chubby youngster, not more than five feet high.

"I have, more than once, and will have them again; there's only one rule and that is to keep cool, hold both eyes open, and do your best."

A depressing disappointment attended the next game, which was played on the Ridgewood grounds. The schedule had been agreed to by both nines at the opening of the season, the only change possible being that due to bad weather. It was about this time that Dick made an engagement to preach for an old college friend who lived so far off that the Ampere preacher had to board the train at Riggsville at four o'clock Saturday afternoon and leave at daylight Monday morning in order to get back. Not until a week afterward did he discover to his dismay that the Saturday on which he would have to go was the one set for the second game. He would have asked his friend to name another Sunday, had he not known that he was called to the bedside of his mother, who lay critically ill. In those circumstances Dick could not appeal to him. All that remained was to request the Ridgewoods to postpone the game. In doing this, Dick was foolish enough to give the true reason: a previous engagement which would take him away from Ampere on that day. Had he not said this, the opponents might have consented, but they chuckled when they learned that it was the terrible third

baseman who would be absent. Postpone the game? Well, I guess not!

Accordingly it was played with another man on third, and the Amperes were defeated; in fact, they were blanked, while the Ridgewoods piled up eleven runs, and were jubilant.

"Fetch on your parson, and we'll trim him!" boasted the captain of the Ridgewoods to the visiting team.

Finally the momentous date came when the deciding game was to be played—the one which, unless it proved a tie, would settle the championship.

It was one of the loveliest days in early summer. The sky was clear, the air balmy, and the temperature perfect. On that Saturday the number of ball games contested throughout the country was beyond computation. The battle between the Amperes and Ridgewoods was sure to prove a royal one. It may be said that substantially all of the people in both districts wended their way to the grounds an hour before the time set for the game.

The Ampere people showed their appreciation of the important occasion by holding a picnic for the children in the leafy woods,

a short distance from the ball grounds. On the western side of the stretch of forest was a lake or pond, twenty acres in extent, with a number of rowboats and sailboats moored at the shore. The prettiest rowboat of all was the "Dorothy" and belonged to the daughter of Doctor Hemingway. She and Dick had taken turns several times in swinging the oars, she displaying a skill that stirred his admiration.

Scores of children, with their parents and friends, gathered in the cool woods on this bright sunshiny forenoon, where the happy hours were spent in playing all sorts of games. Dick went out with the members of the nine to the grounds on the other side of the wood for two hours' practice. When that time passed the boys wished to keep it up.

"No," said the captain, "you are liable to overdo it; you mustn't become stale; you are on edge now and will be fresh this afternoon. Don't bat another ball, or run, unless you feel like entering a foot-race at the picnic."

Thither went all the players, and soon proved that though most of them were young men, they were as much boys as ever, and

the friskiest one of them all was Dick Chandler. He ran races with the girls, and always managed to stumble or lag so as to get beaten, though nothing of the kind happened when a man was his competitor; he swung the youngsters and played their games, made them shriek by his funny antics, and, in fact, acted so uproariously that two of the old maiden ladies gave it as their opinion that it was "scandilaceous."

And once more Dick came upon the fly in the ointment. He had promised to lunch with Doctor Hemingway and Dorothy, under the shade of a big oak, at the edge of the grounds, but when he greeted them, there was Clarence Dubois acting as the escort of the young woman. He had carried her parasol when they were in the sunlight, but not needing it in the wood, he was using it in place of his dainty cane. His new straw hat was encircled by a silken band with blue and white stripes; the rim of his golden eyeglasses seemed to be newly polished; his white vest was spotless, as were the blue serge coat and trousers, the fancy necktie, the striped silk stockings, and the patent leather shoes.

"Aw, Chandler, how do you do?" he

said languidly, as Dick came up. "Hope you're well."

"Never felt better, thank you; you don't look much like an invalid yourself. I hope you will enjoy the picnic to-day. You know we are to have a game of ball."

"Aw, I heard something of the kind; I don't feel any interest in seeing a lot of young men wearing themselves out hitting a ball, trying to catch it, and making an exhibition of themselves. Miss Dorothy and I will stay with the picnic folks and take a boat ride this afternoon."

"Why, Mr. Dubois, I wouldn't miss the ball game for anything," she protested with sparkling eyes.

"Aw, well; I'm ready to sacrifice myself for the benefit of my friends," he replied with a captivating smile, as he nibbled the end of the parasol handle.

"I am sure you will enjoy it," added the venerable doctor, from where he was seated on the little mound at the foot of the oak; "for me it is like renewing my youth; I'm a friend of athletic sports, though we didn't have much of them when I was in college."

Dubois shrugged his shoulders.

"Aw, I think there is some sense in boat-

ing; I never miss the races between Harvard and Yale; and I can enjoy the football contests, for there's some sense in them, but baseball always struck me as vulgaw."

"Every one to his taste," commented Dick; "I hope you won't cheer the Ridgewoods too hard, for it might unnerve us."

"I don't think I'll do much in the way of cheering any of them: it's too great a bore."

"If you feel that way, Mr. Dubois, you can remain here while I go to the game with papa."

"Oh, it's a pleasure to be with you anywhere," he said, with another smile, which brought a blush to the face of the young lady.

It was only a little while before this that Dorothy had laid out the contents of their big lunch basket on the leaves, and soon the delicious repast was being discussed with appreciation by the four.

When the meal was over and the napkins and dishes replaced in the lunch basket, Clarence produced a cigarette, whose golden band contained his initials, and lay back with his shoulders against the oak. It took only a few whiffs to consume the nicotine and rice paper, when he stood up.

"Now, Dorothy, for the boat ride," he said with more animation than he had yet shown; "I promised to give you one after lunch, doncherknow?"

"Will you go with us, papa?"

"Thank you, my daughter, I would rather stay here and move around among the people; it's a pleasure to have a chat like this with them."

"Will you go with us, Mr. Chandler?"

"I beg pardon," interposed Dubois; "but I believe this was to be a ride for you and me, unless your father is willing to make one of the company."

"I prefer to stay with the doctor; I have several matters which I should like to discuss with him," said Dick with dignity.

"I'll excuse you, Dick; go along," was the genial remark of the old clergyman.

"I am afraid I should be an intruder; I have no wish to interfere with any one's pleasure."

Just then Dick caught the eye of the daughter, who was standing slightly back of her escort. She shook her head and said spiritedly:

"You would not intrude at all. It is my wish that you go with us."

"Very well; if you put it that way, I can't refuse."

Clarence did not seem to hear a word. He started toward the lake, Dorothy following, while Dick brought up the rear. He half regretted his acceptance of the invitation, but a smiling glance which she cast over her shoulder made him glad, after all, that he was to be one of the party.

At the side of the water, Clarence assisted Dorothy into the craft and she seated herself at the stern, where he sat down beside her, trimming the boat so that it was evenly balanced.

"That looks as if I am expected to do the rowing," said Dick with a laugh, "which suits me."

He shoved off, stepped lightly within, adjusted the oars in the rowlocks, and grasped them in his muscular hands. Since abundant time was at command, he swung the blades slowly, heading out upon the lake. One peculiarity of this sheet of water was that its depth increased rapidly, so that twenty feet from shore it was over the head of a tall man, while beyond it was much deeper.

Dick's intention was to cross to the other

side and then coast under the overhanging limbs to their starting point; but he had hardly reached the deepest portion when Clarence Dubois, with a meaning grin, laid down the parasol he had been holding, rose to his feet, and began rocking the boat. Dick looked at him in amazement, not comprehending, at first, what he meant. Naturally Dorothy was scared, though she was a fine swimmer.

"Don't do that!" she called, reaching up, seizing his arm, and trying to pull him down beside her. He shook her off, grinned more expansively than before, and rocked the boat harder than ever.

"What do you mean?" she called; "you will upset us!"

The next impulse caused the craft to ship water on one side and then quickly upon the other. Dick awoke from his trance. His superior strength would have made it easy for him to neutralize the efforts of the idiot, but instead of doing so, he stopped rowing and thundered "Stop!"

Clarence paid no attention. He was enjoying the sport and kept it up. Dick did not repeat his command. Lifting one oar from its rowlock, he deftly placed the blade

against the immaculate white vest of Dubois, and gave a single, vigorous shove. It was certainly effective.

Taken thus unawares, the fop toppled over backward, his feet flying up, his hat dropping from his head, and, clawing the air, he splashed down out of sight.

"O Dick!" exclaimed the terrified Dorothy; "he will drown!"

It was the first time she had ever addressed him by his first name, and even in that exciting moment he noticed it.

"Don't you think that is the best use we can make of him?"

She caught his meaning; he was closely watching the fellow and would not let him perish.

Dubois went under at first, but quickly came up, gasping and struggling in affright. His hat had fallen off, but a silken cord held it fast to a buttonhole of his coat, and his eyeglasses were secured in somewhat the same manner. Dubois knew a little about swimming, but like many beginners, he executed his art in steamboat fashion. His hands and feet kept striking the surface, sending the water flying in all directions. Thus he managed to get forward at a slow

rate. He was heading for the boat and struggling desperately.

Dick allowed him to clutch the gunwale, but when he tried to climb in, stopped him.

"You can't come in here, Clarence, until you promise to be a good little boy."

"Wh-wh-at do you mean?" spluttered the indignant fellow, as he was pushed back.

"Just what I said; you have been naughty; if I served you right, I shouldn't let you hang on where you are, but you can stay there while I row ashore. Now mind; if you try to climb into the boat I'll push you back, and then maybe you'll drown. Think of it!"

Clarence looked appealingly at Dorothy, but as he was about to speak he saw that the girl was laughing. So he hung on, while the vulgar ball player deliberately swung the oars and kept keen watch.

"Now, Clarence," said Dick after a time, "we are so close to shore that you can walk. Don't be afraid; the water isn't over your head."

Just then Dubois felt the toes of his shoes touch bottom. He had donned his hat and now slid his glasses in place. Letting himself down, he waded out, the water dripping

from his clothes and "squizzling" upward from his patent leather shoes, as he straddled out upon hard ground. He had taken two or three steps when he stopped abruptly, turned round, fixed a crushing look upon the occupants of the boat, and called out in blood-chilling tones:

"Dorothy Hemingway, I'll never speak to you again!"

Dick held the oars motionless, while he and his companion watched the young man until he disappeared among the trees. Then they looked at each other.

"Don't you think he deserved it?" asked Dick.

"He did, and I am glad you punished him."

"You heard his dreadful threat; can you stand it?"

"I shall try to bear up; he did not mention your name, but I am sure you are included in the punishment."

"For which many thanks. Since Clarence Dubois seems to be eliminated from the situation, I shall, if agreeable to you, make a circuit of the lake, and when you wish, we'll walk with your father to the ball grounds, unless he has found better company."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GREAT BALL GAME

IT was still early, for the game was not to begin until three, but the people began converging toward the field long before that time. When Chandler and Dorothy landed, half of those who had been attending the picnic had left or were beginning to leave. Doctor Hemingway was not visible and the conclusion was reasonable that he had gone ahead with some of his friends.

"Who is to umpire to-day?" asked Dorothy, as the two sauntered forward.

"Asaph Jenkins; he acted as umpire last summer I am told, as he did at the two previous games this season; although not a player himself, he knows every point, and is quick and impartial in his judgment. These admirable qualities are so marked with him that even the Ridgewoods prefer him to any other man in that position."

"I don't envy him his office; it is shameful the way the players abuse the umpire,

no matter how honest and capable he is; my heart has often ached for him."

"I think it is the last duty in the world I should wish to undertake. Still I believe there has never been any trouble with Asaph, though, if the game is close to-day, he is sure to be abused. Well, here we are. What a lot of spectators!"

The grounds could not have been better fitted for their purpose. A dozen acres were as level as a floor and the grass was cut close. The most powerful batter that ever swung the willow could not drive the ball beyond bounds. Since no admission was charged, there was no inclosing fence. Ropes were stretched so as to shut off the crowd from interfering with the players, and no trouble in that respect had as yet occurred.

A thousand people, men, women, and children, must have been gathered around this field, where they used umbrellas, and sunshades as best they could, for there was no natural protecting shade; but the day was pleasant, and had it been really hot it would not have made any difference to players and spectators.

As Dick and Dorothy came in sight of

the grounds they saw that the Ridgewoods had already arrived and were practising with the ball. The respective partisans were gathered opposite each other in order that no discordant note might mar the applause with which they expected to split the air.

Doctor Hemingway, Deacon Whitsett, and Squire Redwood were sitting in a group on the grass, joking with one another, just as if they were three boys. Dick led Dorothy to them, and she sat down, and straightway became an active fourth member of the party. Then Chandler strolled nearer the plate in order to take up the practice when the others withdrew from the field to give them the chance.

Asaph Jenkins caught sight of him and hurried from the bench where he had been sitting with the Ampere players. His face had an anxious expression.

"What's the matter, Asaph?" asked Dick, as he shook his hand.

"The Ridgewoods have played a mean trick on us."

"What do you mean?"

"They have rung in two professionals; they are determined to win the game to-day,

and it doesn't look to me as if anything can stop them."

"How do you know the men are professionals?"

"I know one of them, and it is safe to say the other is. My man is the catcher, but the pitcher is a stranger to me. The catcher is now batting."

"You say you know him? I never saw him before; who is he?"

"Our college club played the New Havens two years ago and Jim Payson was their catcher; he was a good one, too; that's the fellow who is knocking bingoes that threaten to cleave the sky."

"Where is their pitcher?"

"Standing on third and attending to every ball that burns the grass in his neighborhood. Payson was introduced to me by Captain Ahearn as Oren Budd, a new drug clerk in Ridgewood. I didn't recognize him at first, but a few minutes later I caught on."

"Did you say anything? Does he know it?"

"I decided to wait till I had a chance to speak to you."

"I am glad of that; have you told any of our players?"

"Yes; I told them all, and they agreed to wait till you arrived."

During this brief conversation Dick was closely studying the man on third, who certainly showed up well in practice. The distance was too far to see clearly and the two friends sauntered over to a point back of the player. At that moment his cap fell off as he made a grab at a ball that skipped past him. When he stooped to pick up his headgear, the captain of the Amperes recognized him. He exclaimed in an undertone to Jenkins:

"That's Tom Wilton, as sure as I live!"

"Who is Tom Wilton?" asked Jenkins.

"And you pretend to know a good deal of baseball!" said Dick reprovingly.

"It's the first time I have heard his name."

"He used to be the pitcher on the Alhambras and was one of the best in the business. We're up against it."

"What is he doing here?"

"Practising just now. Watch him!"

With only a few rods separating the two friends from third base, Dick called in a brisk tone:

"Hello, Wilton, how are you?"

The fellow turned his head like a flash.

"What do you want?" he gruffly asked.

"Nothing; you and Oren Budd make a good team; I am afraid you will be too much for us."

The new pitcher awoke to the fact that he had made a slip.

"Who are you? My name is Wirt Jones; what's the matter with you, eh?"

"I know that Jones is your name for to-day and Payson is playing under that of Budd."

"Don't get too flip, sonny. What of it?" asked the other threateningly: "what are you going to do about it?"

"We are going to beat you, even if you bring seven more professionals."

Wilton herewith trotted to the plate and took the bat from Payson. Dick walked over to his players.

"We can't do anything," he said. "Wilton and Payson have been given some kind of work in Ridgewood so as to establish a claim to membership of their club. Even if they beat us, the world won't cease to revolve."

"Don't you think we ought to protest to Ahearn?" asked Buck Smith.

"He and Wilton are talking together; I wished them to know that we recognized them; let it go at that."

Jenkins drew Dick aside and said in an undertone:

"Wilton has threatened me."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished captain of the Amperes.

"He told me that if I didn't give his club a square deal he would attend to me after the game."

Dick's eyes flashed.

"That certainly was meant to intimidate you; Asaph, umpire just as you have always done, and I'll see that you are not harmed; if Mr. Wilton tries that business, I'll attend to him."

"I don't wish to get you into any trouble," said his disturbed friend.

"You won't," remarked Dick significantly.

A few minutes later, Dick met Captain Ahearn of the Ridgewoods. The latter wore a foolish smile, like one detected in a mean act. He evidently was prepared for a protest, but Dick said nothing. They agreed upon Jenkins for umpire, and in accordance with a former understanding, the Amperes went first to bat. The hun-

dreds of spectators fringing the grounds became hushed and tensely attentive.

When Chandler, as first batsman, stepped to the plate, he was greeted by a general clapping of hands. The majority of visitors joined in the applause, for he was respected and liked by them. Standing thus, graceful, expectant, and alert, Dick heard several insulting expressions in which Catcher Payson was indulging. They were meant to annoy him, but he paid no heed. Jenkins heard them and raised his hand as an order for the pitcher, who was about to deliver the ball, to wait.

"If there is anything more of that," said the umpire to the catcher; "I'll put you out of the game."

"He doesn't bother me," remarked Dick with a light laugh, "and perhaps he feels better."

"He will annoy others; it is not true sport."

Payson was about to make a defiant reply, but suddenly changed his mind. With an irritating grin, he said:

"Don't be horrid, Mr. Umpire; I'll try to be real good."

"One strike!" shouted Jenkins, as the

ball cut the plate fairly, and at an instant when Chandler was not expecting it. The second ball followed in the path of the first, and Dick caught it on the end of his bat. There was a crack like the report of a pistol, and the sphere went sailing skyward, so far over the center fielder's head that, although he started on a desperate run after it, it was plain it would fall beyond his reach.

Again the visitors from Ridgewood joined in the applause, as Dick ran leisurely around the bases, and tapped one foot on the home-plate, at the moment when the ball started on its aerial journey from deep center.

Captain Ahearn, who played first, was angry. He strode across to the pitcher.

"Didn't I tell you not to do that? Pass him every time."

"I'll see to it after this," replied Wilton; "I wanted to find out whether he was such a great batter as you folks said."

"Well, I guess you found out; he'll do that right along if you give him a chance."

Buck followed his captain. He struck a couple of fouls, and then sent a ball skipping to second. The fielder captured and hurled it to first in time to head off Buck, who

was striving with might and main to reach the goal. Each of the following batsmen went out on flies. Wilton was pitching well. Indeed, all his side did finely in the first half of the inning.

Captain Ahearn was the first one up. After he had whizzed his bat twice through space, he drove a bounder straight to Dick. As Dick snatched it from the ground he held it an instant and called:

"I hate to do it, Cap, but there's no help for it."

And the sphere sped across the diamond like an arrow from the bow, straight into the mitt of the first baseman, while the fiercely-running captain was yet several yards from the bag.

The next batter was the mighty Wilton, husky, powerful, and a veteran ball-player. Dick longed for a chance to put him out, but the wily fellow cut the grass between first and second with such vim that he reached second ahead of the ball. Payson followed with another in precisely the same place, and Wilton came home. The next two went out on fouls. Thus the first inning closed with a run for each side.

Both nines played well. Once Buck

"went up in the air," as the expression goes, but a few encouraging words from Dick brought him down again. He never pitched better, though he was hardly the equal of Wilton. Not once did the latter give Dick another chance. Despite the taunts of the spectators he allowed the Ampere captain to walk to first each time. Twice this proved costly, for there were men on bases ahead of him, and as often one of them was batted home. Buck was delighted when it fell to him thus to aid his captain. The work of the umpire was so simple and his rulings so fair that there was no trouble until the eighth inning. Then a "ruction" came.

The Ridgewoods were at the bat. The score was a tie; two were out, and Wilton was on second, from which point he shouted to Payson to line her out. Payson was as eager to oblige as his friend to reach home-plate. If it could be done, the visitors would be a run ahead, while the Amperes had only one more turn at the bat.

Dick called to Buck to keep cool and take his time. Flynn saw that Wilton was gathering himself for a dash to third, and was edging perilously far off second. He meant to attempt it, as soon as Buck made

the preliminary motion to pitch. Dick observed the same thing and was on the alert to take the ball from the catcher, with the probabilities that there would be a collision between him and Wilton in the latter's efforts to make third.

Suddenly Buck caught the signal of his catcher. It said:

"Throw to second!"

Buck whirled and shot the ball like a rifle shot. The second baseman snapped it upon the massive shoulder a breath before Wilton slapped his shoe on the bag.

"Out at second!" proclaimed the umpire.

"What!" shouted the furious runner, as if he could not believe his ears.

"You're out!" repeated Jenkins, waving him off the field. As he was the third player down, all the other Amperes began hurrying in from the field.

Dick saw that Wilton was heading for the umpire. He therefore increased his pace so as to arrive at the same moment. The countenance of the professional was aflame.

"Say, what do you mean by that decision? What are you giving us?"

"You were out fairly, and you know it."

"I told you if you didn't give us a square deal," threatened Wilton, "I'd settle with you; just chew that over and don't sneak off the field after the next inning, but take your medicine like a man."

"Tom Wilton," said Dick, stepping in front of him, "Mr. Jenkins has umpired fairly; you have threatened him, and I now threaten you: If you lay the weight of your finger on him, I'll send you to the hospital within the next five minutes!"

Brief as was the angry discussion, it quickly brought the other players around the little group, while many of the spectators began flocking upon the diamond. Wilton was dazed for an instant by Chandler's words and manner, as Dick shook his forefinger almost against the other's red nose. The professional ordinarily would have been a tough nut to crack, but the "old Adam" in Dick yearned for the excuse. As for Asaph Jenkins, he was smiling in his one-sided way.

"Wilton, here's your chance; give me a love-tap, so that Dick will have an excuse to smash you to smithereens," and he stepped tauntingly in front of the bully.

Captain Ahearn interfered at this critical

moment. Slipping his arm under that of Wilton, he forced him away from the spot. He talked earnestly with him. One of the Ampere players who passed them heard Ahearn say:

"He'll do what he said he would, if you touch the umpire. I don't care if he is a parson, he's one of the greatest fighters in the country; you were put out fairly: what's the sense of kicking?"

Wilton made a sullen answer, which the Ampere player did not catch.

It was now the last turn of the Amperes at the bat, unless the score should continue a tie, in which event an extra inning or more of course would be necessary. The first one up was Larry Murphy, the center fielder and the poorest batter on the nine. He had not yet made a hit and was followed by two other weak batters. The outlook was gloomy.

But one of the attractions of the great American game is the unexpected, which is likely to happen at any stage of the sport. Larry made a bunt and reached first. Straightway he dived for second. He had not run more than two-thirds of the distance when Payson, the catcher, threw un-

erringly to the baseman there. He in his nervousness made his first misplay, the ball bounding from his hands and rolling so far afield that Larry, amid the cheering and laughter of his friends, scrambled to third. The batter who followed him made another successful bunt, and Larry slid to the plate amid a cloud of dust. Those who followed were quickly put out.

Thus, when the Ridgewoods went to the bat, they needed a run to tie and two to win the game. Once more Buck Smith lost his nerve for a moment and passed two of his opponents. Dick spoke soothingly to him and he pulled himself together again. Then Ike Flynn, his catcher, in his straining eagerness had his first passed ball and each runner moved up. All the bases were occupied and not a man of the Ridgewoods was out.

Tom Wilton stepped confidently to the plate. He signaled to the runners to make a break the instant he hit the ball, which he was certain he would do. It would be a sort of "squeeze play," though accompanied by great risk.

Tom struck viciously at the first ball pitched, and couldn't have met it more

squarely. So lightning-like was the rebound from his bat that only one person for the instant saw where the sphere went: that person was Dick Chandler, who was standing on third bag. What he did was instinctive. It seemed that in the same second that Wilton hit the ball, it landed in the hands of Dick, who, without moving a foot, touched the runner standing a couple of paces away, who was waiting to see where the sphere had gone.

The runner on second made a dive for third, and was well on his way when he awoke to his mistake. He saw the third baseman, ball in hand, coming toward him like a runaway engine. He checked himself, turned to go back to second, slipped slightly, quickly recovered, but by that time Dick was upon him, and tapped him twice with the ball between the shoulders.

Dick Chandler had made a triple play unassisted—an exploit which has not been seen three times in the history of baseball.

The game was won and the Amperes were the champions for the season!

CHAPTER XXIV

TWO DECISIONS

AT the close of a soft summer afternoon Dick Chandler and Dorothy Hemingway strolled down to the edge of the woods by the lake where the picnic was held a few weeks before. Both were thoughtful, for Dick had told his friend that he wished her advice upon a matter that was important to him. When they came to a fallen tree, at his invitation she sat down while he placed himself beside her.

It should be understood that her seat was at the base of the trunk, while he modestly located himself quite near the knot farthest removed. It would have been quite easy for two persons to sit between them without discomfort.

"Miss Hemingway," said Dick gravely, "since your father has few or no secrets from you, I suppose he has told you of his resignation as pastor of Ampere church."

"I have been urging it upon him for

months past," she quietly replied; "his labors during the revival have worn him down; he is well past three-score and ten; he has served his Master well and has earned rest."

"I agree with you; are you aware that I have been asked to take his place?"

She looked across to him with a bright smile.

"No urging by him was needed to bring that about; I can safely say that not only every member of the official board, but every member of the church and congregation, desires you to become our pastor."

"Then you advise me to accept?"

"That is a question to which you yourself must give the answer."

Dick saw the justice of her reply, and yet it caused him a tinge of disappointment. He yearned to hear her say she personally wished him to become their minister, so he said,

"I should be glad to know your feelings in the matter."

"I have already told you."

"When?"

"I am a member of the church and congregation."

He laughed at her readiness.

"Does not the greater include the less?" she added.

"That is an axiom; so you consider yourself the less?"

"I am only one among many."

Silence fell for a few moments upon the two. Then he spoke with unusual seriousness:

"My stay in Ampere has proved the road to Damascus for me."

"I am not quite sure I understand you, Mr. Chandler."

"When the apostle set out for Damascus——"

"To persecute the brethren," she interjected with a sly look, for she now understood what was coming.

"True; but on the way he saw a great light. Although I am a licensed preacher I have not yet been ordained. I have told you and your father the reason: the indications were not clear as to what field I should enter; I have been waiting for the light."

"Has it come?"

"It has; it shows me that here is my field of labor: my experience in Ampere has

brushed away all mists; every doubt is removed: I accepted the offer last evening."

"I am aware of that."

"But I have not yet informed your father."

"You told Uncle Silas Redwood, however, and after you had gone to your room, he stole out of the house and hurried over to the parsonage with the good news."

"The sly rascal! It's just like him."

Again silence fell upon the couple. Finally Dick asked:

"Did the squire tell your father what he said to me?"

"He may have done so, but what could he say except to express his pleasure?"

"Well," exclaimed Dick, rousing himself; "I'll tell you his words."

"Have you Uncle Silas's permission to betray him?" gently asked the young woman.

"Did he ask my permission to say what he did to the doctor?"

"I presume not, from the excitement you show."

"Well, then I sha'n't ask his. He said there was only one objection to my becoming pastor of Ampere church, but it could be readily removed."

"THE NEW CLERGYMAN OUGHT TO BE A MARRIED MAN."

"Then he is not fully satisfied with your qualifications?"

"It is hardly that; he insists that the new clergyman ought to be a married man."

"That sounds sensible; Uncle Silas and Aunt Samantha have lived so long and so happily together that naturally he wishes others to enjoy the same good fortune."

"I agree with the squire."

Dorothy Hemingway was impatient with herself that she could not repress the gentle blush that began stealing over her cheeks. That instinct which belongs to her sex told her what was "in the air," though her words gave no intimation of such knowledge.

"So fine a ball player as you, one so popular among the young and old men, and I may add among the young and old ladies, too, will have no difficulty in finding one well fitted and willing to become your life partner. You must not select—if you will allow me to suggest—a young and frivolous girl, nor one who is austere and uncharitable."

"Where shall I find the proper one?"

"There are plenty of them and in your own congregation, too. It would be well if she were several years older than you, like

the good Mrs. Connell; I have been told that such marriages are the happiest."

"I don't believe it! Doctor Hemingway has invited me several times to make my home with him."

"You do not need me to assure you that you will be welcome."

"Now that I have decided to accept this call, would it be in good taste for me to occupy the parsonage?"

"I surely think so."

"I told the doctor yesterday that I should be delighted to accept his invitation, but it must be on one condition. His daughter must become my wife—did he tell you that?" demanded Dick in dismay.

The woods rang with Dorothy's laughter.

"He certainly did; haven't you learned yet that papa and I have no secrets from each other?"

"And what did you say to him?"

"Now, Dick!"

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